

Hazardous disrepair in social housing

March 2026

As part of our commitment to prioritise the delivery and availability of appropriate housing, we have undertaken a one-day inquiry into hazardous disrepair in social housing. Our work has focused on social landlords' response to such disrepair, and the steps the Welsh Government has taken to improve processes to identify and remediate hazards.

1. The terms of reference for our work were to examine:
 - The extent of hazardous disrepair in social housing in Wales, the level of health risk faced by tenants, and how housing conditions and responses to disrepair are monitored;
 - How effectively social landlords are currently responding to reports of hazardous disrepair, particularly issues with damp and mould;
 - The Welsh Government's creation of a new rule within the WHQS requiring social landlords to investigate and remedy certain hazards within specified timescales, including:
 - the rationale for this approach and how effective it is likely to be;
 - and



- the anticipated impact on tenants and landlords;
- What proactive steps social landlords are taking to identify and remedy hazardous disrepair within their housing stock; and
- How the Welsh Government and social landlords are engaging and involving tenants in issues relating to hazardous disrepair.

2. To inform our work, we invited targeted stakeholders to provide written evidence and held a series of oral evidence sessions on 5 March. All written responses have been published on our website and a transcript of the 5 March meeting is available.

3. Alongside our formal evidence gathering, we wanted to hear directly from tenants, therefore we commissioned the Senedd's Citizen Engagement Team to undertake one-to-one depth interviews with social housing tenants in Wales. Details of the case studies presented have been published. We are grateful to everyone who has contributed to our work on this important issue.

4. Due to the timescales involved in this work, it has not been possible to publish a full report with recommendations to the Welsh Government prior to the Senedd's dissolution ahead of the May 2026 election. However, we hope that our inquiry has shone a light on this important issue, and that this summary of the evidence we received and our key conclusions will provide a basis for further work in the Seventh Senedd. This summary has been shared with the Welsh Government.

Extent and impact of hazardous disrepair

5. Data from the latest Welsh Housing Conditions Survey which was delivered in 2017-18 shows that seven per cent of social homes in Wales had a Category 1 hazard, compared to 20 per cent of owner-occupied homes and 24 per cent of privately rented homes.

6. Public Health Wales noted that Wales has some of the oldest housing stock in Europe and that older dwellings are more likely to contain Category 1 hazards. The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH) told us that properties built before the 1920s are most likely to have damp and mould problems and that such housing stock is more susceptible to building defects, either through wear and tear or through design.

Existing data

- 7.** Data was a key theme that emerged with several witnesses expressing concerns about the current lack of data around disrepair. CIEH noted that results from the next Welsh Housing Conditions Survey are not due until 2027-28, and suggested that these surveys should be undertaken more regularly, ideally “at an interval more regular than a decade”.¹ Despite this, we heard current data suggests that the social housing sector is “in very good condition”,² particularly in comparison to the private rented sector.
- 8.** Figures released by the Welsh Government in March 2023 demonstrated that 78 per cent of social housing stock was fully compliant with the previous Wales Housing Quality Standard (WHQS). A further 22 per cent were compliant subject to acceptable fails, with ‘timing of remedy’ and ‘residents’ choice’ cited as the most common reasons for the acceptable fail. In February 2026, the Welsh Government published the first statistics on progress towards achieving the new WHQS 2023 which showed that 48 per cent met the standard fully and 5 per cent met it with a conditional pass. Welsh Government officials told us that this data would allow a more detailed analysis of the quality of social homes in the coming years.
- 9.** Witnesses told us that damp and mould problems are a common disrepair issue. The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) highlighted that social housing is the second largest complained about public service in Wales, with over half of complaints relating to damp and disrepair and the damaging effects on families living in these properties. The damaging effects were also highlighted by the tenants who participated in our engagement activities. Shelter Cymru noted that around 15 per cent of their total caseload relates to damp and mould issues across tenures. They added that their online advice pages for damp and disrepair, “had about 30,000 visits in the last calendar year”.³
- 10.** Community Housing Cymru (CHC) pointed out that the Welsh Government’s 2025 tenant satisfaction survey sheds some light on specific data about the quality of disrepair services. They said that tenants:

¹ Local Government and Housing Committee, 5 March 2026, Record of Proceedings (RoP) paragraph 87

² Local Government and Housing Committee, 5 March 2026, RoP paragraph 7

³ Local Government and Housing Committee, 5 March 2026, RoP paragraph 110

“were reporting overall satisfaction rates of 77 per cent, quality at 77 percent and approach to repairs at 71 per cent...83 per cent of those responding felt that their homes were safe and secure”.⁴

11. The tenant satisfaction survey also indicates that tenants in homes owned by stock-holding local authorities are less likely to be satisfied with the way their landlord deals with repairs and maintenance. The Cabinet Secretary for Housing and Local Government provided additional written evidence setting out some potential reasons for this, including variations in the way the survey data is collected, different housing stock profiles, and differences in regulation and governance arrangements.

Increase in reporting of complaints

12. One main theme that emerged from our evidence was an increase in the percentage of hazardous disrepair complaints over recent years. The PSOW told us that her office has seen an increase over the last few years in both cases and complaints relating to disrepair and the damaging effects on families living in these properties.

13. The PSOW told us that many of the cases she deals with “shouldn’t escalate to a complaint”, but that tenants are having to “raise a complaint to get a service request dealt with” as “things haven’t been sorted out”. We heard that at the point of referral to the Ombudsman, cases are more complex, often due to⁵ having not been resolved at an earlier stage, leading to further issues.

14. Several witnesses attributed the rise in complaints to an increase of awareness, visibility and coverage of damp and mould cases especially following the tragic death of Awaab Ishak in 2020. The PSOW and social landlords told us that more tenants are aware of their rights and how to access resources and pathways to complain, and are willing to escalate complaints if they are not satisfied with how their landlords have dealt with issues, particularly damp and mould. Shelter Cymru suggested the cost-of-living crisis may also have contributed to a rise in incidents of damp and mould, as more tenants may be struggling to afford to heat their homes.

⁴ Local Government and Housing Committee, 5 March 2026, RoP paragraph 248

⁵ Local Government and Housing Committee, 5 March 2026, RoP paragraph 17

Concerns of under-reporting

15. Despite an increase in reporting of damp and disrepair cases, witnesses highlighted several reasons as to why some cases may still not be reported or brought to landlords' attention in the first instance. National Independent Tenant Voice Cymru (NITVC) referred to several reasons, including that tenants may feel embarrassed or may fear being blamed by landlords for not looking after their properties. They noted that tenants who are in rent arrears may be less likely to report damp and mould due to fear of repercussions.⁶ Witnesses also told us that tenants who have previously suffered from damp and mould related issues may be less likely to report because they were let down or mistreated, or because of poor experiences of the quality of service provided. We heard that concerns around being blamed for not ventilating their properties or using amenities like tumble driers etc can prevent tenants from reporting issues. Our engagement work highlighted cases where tenants had been blamed for causing the mouldy conditions in their homes and the impact this had on them.

16. Shelter Cymru argued that some tenants may struggle to use digital tools to report issues, and suggested some would still prefer to raise issues face to face. NITVC acknowledged that holding additional surgeries could be costly and suggested that greater use could be made of existing community spaces to keep costs low.⁷ Many witnesses expressed the importance of proactive action from landlords to deal with issues early on and rebuild trust with tenants, especially those who have had unsatisfactory experiences in previous years. NITVC expressed that:

“we’ve got a duty to ask the organisations to...look at those people that were ignored or blamed previously and say, “we’re sorry”.”⁸

17. Witnesses from third sector and tenant organisations emphasised the importance of co-operation and communication between landlords, tenants and the Welsh Government in order to tackle under-reporting. Shelter Cymru suggested that the Welsh Government should work with organisations like theirs to “get the messages out about the rights that people have, because we can’t enforce rights if people genuinely don’t know they have them”.⁹

⁶ Local Government and Housing Committee, 5 March 2026, RoP paragraph 124

⁷ Local Government and Housing Committee, 5 March 2026, RoP paragraphs 136 & 140

⁸ Local Government and Housing Committee, 5 March 2026, RoP paragraph 125

⁹ Local Government and Housing Committee, 5 March 2026, RoP paragraph 138

18. Witnesses expressed the importance of actively reporting issues early as a solution to under-reporting so that landlords are aware and can take the necessary steps going forward.

Our view

19. The lack of definitive and recent data on the extent of hazardous disrepair across social housing in Wales is concerning, as without such data, it is impossible to know how many people are faced with poor living conditions on a daily basis. We have previously called for a Welsh housing survey and have welcomed the Welsh Government's approval of a business case to undertake a survey in 2027-28.

20. Despite a lack of up-to-date data on housing quality, we recognise that the general consensus from witnesses is the extent of disrepair in social housing is overall better compared to the private rented sector. However, we heard that the small proportion of disrepair issues which are not properly addressed are causing significant harm to tenants' health and quality of life. Given the human cost of these problems, it is right that the Welsh Government is taking steps to improve practices in this area.

21. We recognise that the increase in reporting and complaints in relation to damp and mould is partially due to increased awareness and visibility, however we are concerned that the continued cost of living crisis – particularly the cost of heating homes – is also a significant factor in higher rates. While we welcome the increased awareness among tenants and their readiness to raise complaints, it is deeply concerning that it took such a tragic incident for change to happen.

22. Despite increased awareness, we are still concerned that tenants are not reporting or are hesitant to voice disrepair problems because of several factors including dissatisfaction from previous attempts to report, quality of service provided, fears due to rent arrears, and prolonged response times from landlords. It is clear that further work is needed to ensure that all tenants have the confidence to report issues of disrepair to their landlord and feel assured that these will be resolved properly.

Social landlords' approach to repairs and maintenance and response to complaints

23. There was a general consensus among those we heard from that improvements have been made since the tragic death of Awaab Ishak in 2020. We heard from CHC that the tragedy, along with that of the Grenfell Tower fire,

had “sent shockwaves through the sector” and that they felt the lessons from those events had been heard. We heard from social landlords about some of the specific measures they have put in place to improve the situation, including re-assessing policies and procedures in regard of damp and mould, greater use of diagnostic tools, more robust checks as part of the stock condition surveys, recording damp and mould inspections and strengthened reporting and assurance processes.

24. Tenant organisations also felt that social landlord practices and culture have improved, however we heard that in some cases, a tendency remains to blame tenants for causing damp and mould. This was expressed by tenants who participated in our engagement work and alluded to by the CIEH, although it was acknowledged that landlord approaches had improved.

25. Despite improvements, some witnesses suggested social landlords do not necessarily have the processes and systems in place yet to meet their ambitions. Some suggested that complex cases, particularly with damp and mould, or where a tenant has vulnerabilities or health conditions, seem to be hardest to tackle. We heard that the sector had “historically” not been proactive in assessing disrepair in the context of a tenant’s vulnerability. Some tenant representatives were also concerned about a lack of in-depth inspections being undertaken or a “plaster culture” approach to “plaster over the cracks” rather than fixing them.

26. The Ombudsman echoed the sentiment that underlying problems are not always being addressed, telling us that many of the complaints made to her office relate to issues where a tenant has made repeated requests to their social landlord which have not been resolved effectively. Tenants complain to her office “because they remain dissatisfied with the way that their social housing landlord has responded to their request for service and complaint”.¹⁰

27. The Ombudsman suggested that there is a “real opportunity” for social landlords to address issues early to prevent their escalation to more complex problems which take time to resolve. This would prevent tenants from having to wait longer and make repeated requests to get issues fixed. We heard that receiving multiple requests should be a realisation to the social landlord that more effective action is needed to address an issue. The Ombudsman emphasised the importance of staff being aware of procedures for dealing with repairs and complaints and knowing how to deal with them. She also said there

¹⁰ Local Government and Housing Committee, 5 March 2026, RoP paragraph 13

was room for improvement in how social landlords deal with tenants who are potentially vulnerable, particularly those who are disabled or in ill health.

28. Witnesses also emphasised the need to identify issues not being reported. Shelter Cymru suggested there was a need for proactive engagement from landlords, to help to rebuild trust with tenants. There was an acknowledgement of the need for collective responsibility by both tenants and landlords to identify issues of disrepair, although landlords noted that tenants are best placed to identify and report issues in their homes. Landlords spoke about it being the responsibility of all staff to report concerns and be proactive about spotting hazards, and there was a call for all staff that visit a tenant's home to be trained to be able to identify disrepair.

29. We heard of the challenges sometimes faced by social landlords in responding to repair requests, including the complexity of some disrepair problems, the availability of trades people, difficulties monitoring the quality of work undertaken by contractors and particularly gaining access to a tenant's home. Tenant representatives told us this is often the result of mistrust felt by tenants if their previous experience of requesting repairs had been problematic, and called for better partnerships between landlords and tenants to improve this. Witnesses also recognised that social landlords may face different challenges in responding to repairs, often depending on the nature and location of their housing stock and the size of the organisation.

Our view

30. We recognise that social landlords have made improvements in recent years in how they respond to complaints of hazardous disrepair and we welcome the acknowledgement of this expressed by stakeholders. We also recognise that the number of complaints is low proportionally, however it is concerning that some cases that could be addressed at an early stage are not resolved effectively, leading to an escalation of more complex cases. Despite the improvements, greater consistency across social landlords is still needed and it is particularly concerning to hear that some tenants still feel that they are blamed for causing cases of disrepair themselves, especially with cases of damp and mould.

31. We welcome the recognition that responsibility for identifying hazards and disrepair is not solely the responsibility of tenants, and although landlords have taken steps to be more proactive, it is evident that further improvement is needed. Being more proactive is crucial in preventing the escalation of many cases and we feel strongly that landlords need to adopt a more holistic approach

in their response to resolving issues. It is particularly concerning that some tenants can be reluctant to report cases of disrepair, either due to mistrust stemming from frustration at previous experiences or fear of repercussions for those in rent arrears. Better communication is needed between some landlords and their tenants to improve levels of trust along with a greater acknowledgement that tenants know their homes and understand the issues they face.

The Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS)

32. We discussed with stakeholders the Welsh Government’s approach to ensuring social landlords take prompt action on health hazards in the home, specifically the changes introduced to the WHQS in December 2025 which will require landlords, from 1 April 2026, to investigate and remediate certain hazards within specific timescales, and where that has not been possible, to provide a written summary plan to tenants within 5 working days.

33. General support was expressed for the new WHQS rule, with several stakeholders telling us that it should lead to greater transparency and accountability, however concerns were raised that the increased focus on meeting targets may deter from other aspects. We heard from the Ombudsman that her casework deals with “lower level things” which won’t necessarily need to be logged or reported as part of the new rule, and her concern is that landlords may overlook opportunities for early action which would prevent escalation in order to focus on meeting targets. A similar concern was also expressed by organisations representing tenants. We were told that tenants are actually “more fearful” of the new rule in case it leads to “plastering over issues” or to substandard work being undertaken.

34. Despite the support expressed, concerns around potential unintended consequences led to calls for the effectiveness of the rule to be monitored and reviewed within a few years of implementation.

35. Tenant representatives emphasised the need to ensure that tenants are informed of the change, noting that this “needs to be really well communicated” so that tenants know what they can expect under the new arrangements. This was acknowledged by social landlords and we heard of an example in North Wales where social landlords across the region have collaborated on communicating with tenants.

Scope of the new rule

36. We sought views from stakeholders on the scope of the new rule, specifically that it will apply to all Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) hazards, other than overcrowding and that social landlords will be required to take into account the circumstances of tenants, including any vulnerabilities, when assessing the risk posed by a hazard. Tenant representatives welcomed the scope of the rule but referred to the exclusion of overcrowding, noting that until that issue can be solved, it will be more challenging to resolve other issues. Tai Pawb noted that Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people are disproportionately affected by overcrowding, and associated issues with damp and mould. Shelter Cymru suggested that data should be captured on cases where overcrowding is an issue, to enable a better understanding of the scale of the problem and how it relates to other disrepair issues.

37. The additional consideration of a tenant’s vulnerability was welcomed by stakeholders and referred to as “reasonable and appropriate” by the CIEH.¹¹ However, CIEH expressed concern that a requirement for the person making decisions on urgency to be HHSRS qualified is missing from the new rule. We were told that without such a requirement, there would be no record of whether or not there was a hazard. Tai Pawb noted the need to ensure that people receiving repair requests are “highly trained to be able to do that effectively” and to ensure “there’s consistency in those risk assessment processes”.¹²

38. Welsh Government officials explained that the HHSRS is familiar to the sector and that the decision to extend the requirements to all hazards was taken with a view to protecting tenants. They also said they believe it to be a “balanced approach”¹³, and that the scope had been restricted to ensure it was proportionate for landlords. They noted that Awaab’s Law in England will cover the same range of hazards once it has been fully rolled out.

Timescales for implementation

39. We heard from social landlords that a phased implementation of the new rule would have been preferable, however they were fairly confident of being able to comply from April, particularly in cases of damp and mould. Cardiff Council

¹¹ Local Government and Housing Committee, 5 March 2026, RoP paragraph 77

¹² Local Government and Housing Committee, 5 March 2026, RoP paragraph 163

¹³ Local Government and Housing Committee, 5 March 2026, RoP paragraph 461

highlighted compliance with the summary plans as a particular challenge as their current systems are not equipped for this.

40. Although the implementation timescales are short, Shelter Cymru highlighted that the sector has known for several years to expect changes similar to those set out in the new rule, therefore preparatory work should be underway. This view was echoed by tenant representatives. Shelter Cymru said it was preferable to have an earlier implementation, and a tolerance for some landlords potentially not meeting the standards from the outset.

41. Social landlords told us that the biggest challenge will be meeting the new reporting arrangements from 1 April, particularly as additional information is still being provided by the Welsh Government. We were told that the sector had only received clarity from the Welsh Government on data reporting the day before our evidence session. Welsh Government officials told us that this was due to being responsive to some of the concerns raised and that they had worked to clarify and simplify some of the reporting requirements.

Consistent application

42. As one of the key goals of the new rule is to provide greater consistency across Wales in dealing with hazards and disrepair, some stakeholders were disappointed at a perceived lack of clear guidance from the Welsh Government. We heard concerns about consistency in relation to assessing hazards other than damp and mould, specifically around being able identify what constitutes ‘significant’ and ‘imminent’ hazards as the definitions are “somewhat vague”.¹⁴ It was suggested that example case studies might be useful in determining the risks. We heard from CHC that further guidance around how to respond to hazards and undertaking health assessments for hazards other than damp and mould would be welcomed.

43. The need for risks to be assessed in the same way was emphasised to us. Concern was raised by the lack of a “strong risk assessment tool”¹⁵ and that organisations creating their own tools is likely to result in inconsistent application.

44. We were also told that clear guidance should be provided “as to what constitutes a formal complaint” and “at what point the clock starts ticking” in terms of responding to and resolving a complaint.¹⁶

¹⁴ Local Government and Housing Committee, 5 March 2026, RoP paragraph 73

¹⁵ Local Government and Housing Committee, 5 March 2026, RoP paragraph 204

¹⁶ Local Government and Housing Committee, 5 March 2026, RoP paragraph 76

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45. Another point raised by social landlords is that rule will not apply to something which is outside of the landlord's control which, without guidance, could be interpreted inconsistently. We were told that the lack of such guidance is a "major flaw".

46. The call for further guidance was acknowledged by Welsh Government officials who referred to workshops being held and a series of FAQs produced to help address some of the questions from the sector. They acknowledged that it is a new process and committed to working with the sector should there be a need for further guidance.

Learning and improvement

47. There was recognition among witnesses that the sector will need to learn from each other once the new rule is implemented. We heard that some organisations may perform well while others may struggle, therefore an understanding of what works well will be needed, including systems and approaches, and mechanisms for learning from others.

Regulation and accountability

48. We considered arrangements for monitoring social landlords' compliance with the new rule, particularly the need for it to be reported on as part of their wider WHQS compliance reporting from October 2027 and a separate high level compliance report as part of the quarterly social landlord return from June 2026.

49. We heard there is currently very little data available, therefore the reporting arrangements should bring better data and lead to more transparency.

50. Tai Pawb told us that assessing the effectiveness of the new rule should not be done by looking at how many compliant reports social landlords report upon, but that a "deeper dive"¹⁷ on its impact will be needed. Shelter Cymru added that the regulator will need to look at that data and proactively identify what needs to be done.

51. The Welsh Government officials confirmed that they will work with landlords to ensure that data from the "first couple of quarters"¹⁸ is quality assured and understood in terms of anomalies, and that it will not be published until there is a collective view that the right information is captured and understood. They went

¹⁷ Local Government and Housing Committee, 5 March 2026, RoP paragraph 188

¹⁸ Local Government and Housing Committee, 5 March 2026, RoP paragraph 414

on to say that their hope is that by the 2027 release, it will be possible to publish data “at an individual landlord basis” but that this will be kept under review.¹⁹

Our view

52. It is crucial that lessons have been learnt and changes made following the tragic death of Awaab Ishak and we therefore welcome the action taken by the Welsh Government in developing the new WHQS rule. We recognise that the rule has been developed in collaboration with the Disrepair in Social Housing Stakeholder Group and we hope that partnership working with and buy-in from the sector will lead to effective implementation of the new arrangements. We are aware that this approach is different to the legislative pathways chosen in Scotland and England, although there are similarities between the scope of the different approaches.

53. We welcome the support expressed by the sector for the new rule, although we are also mindful of the potential for unintended consequences highlighted to us. This will need to be monitored carefully to ensure that the drive to comply with the new targets does not detract focus away from addressing cases which could be classed as lower level. As we heard, lower level cases can escalate quite quickly if not resolved properly, therefore a focus on doing so must be maintained.

54. We support the breadth of the new rule in encompassing wider HHSRS hazards, not just damp and mould, it is right that other hazards are dealt with in the same way. However, we would echo the concerns expressed by some witnesses in relation to overcrowding. We understand why overcrowding has not been included within the new rule and acknowledge that an increase in particular types of social homes is needed to adequately address overcrowding problems. We have explored the issues around social housing supply further in our work on that inquiry. Nonetheless, we believe the Welsh Government’s work on improving housing conditions should have a greater focus on identifying and alleviating overcrowding, and as we heard that Black and Ethnic Minority people are disproportionately affected, this would be in line with its ambition to create an anti-racist Wales.

55. We also support the implementation of the new rule commencing on 1 April 2026. We appreciate that these changes will happen very quickly following the Cabinet Secretary’s announcement in December 2025, but given the importance of these measures, we do not believe that commencement should be delayed.

¹⁹ Local Government and Housing Committee, 5 March 2026, RoP paragraph 473

While the call from landlords for a phased approach to implementation is not unreasonable, we agree that given the sector's involvement in the stakeholder group and other factors, they would have been aware of the likely changes ahead of the Cabinet Secretary's announcement.

56. We are sympathetic to the calls for greater guidance from the sector, as consistency in delivery across all social landlords will be crucial. We realise that some guidance and FAQs have been produced, but the call from the sector for further guidance was clear and unanimous. The lack of guidance on assessing risk and interpreting the definitions is a particular concern to us. The new rule aims to improve consistency in responding to and resolving cases of hazardous disrepair, but we are concerned that insufficient guidance may lead to greater inconsistency if assessments are not undertaken in the same way by social landlords. We heard the need for a strong risk assessment tool which can be used by all social landlords and we agree that this would be useful in achieving consistency.

57. Although the Welsh Government officials committed to working with the sector on further guidance if needed, this should be done swiftly. The timeframe between the Cabinet Secretary's decision and commencement is relatively brief, but as social landlords are required to implement the rule within this timescale, the Welsh Government should be able to provide adequate guidance in a timely way.

58. It is concerning that clarification on data reporting requirements was not provided to the sector until early March, which has left little time ahead of commencement. It appeared to us that, particularly when it comes to data collection and reporting, detail was still being refined during the inquiry. We welcome the commitment from Welsh Government officials that they will be working to ensure they understand and quality assure the data being collected during the first 6 months of implementation.

59. As the new rule is implemented, it will be crucial for social landlords to learn from each other. We strongly believe that clear mechanisms should be in place to identify areas of good practice and share that experience with others. In addition to sharing good practice, we believe that social landlords should be made accountable if they choose not to adopt measures which have been proven to be effective. We are concerned that this 'adopt or justify' approach is currently missing from the new arrangements.

60. Given that greater transparency and sector accountability is a key aim of the new rule, it is somewhat disappointing that data will not be published until next year. However, we understand why such flexibility has been agreed by the Welsh Government. We would be concerned should publication of data be delayed any further as tenants have a right to know how their landlord is performing. When data is provided to the Welsh Government, we agree that this will need to be considered very carefully so that any anomalies are identified.

Implications for other policy areas

61. Social landlords noted that the new WHQS rule is being introduced at a time when reforms are being made across a number of areas affecting social housing. CHC referred to “competing and extensive expectations” on the sector and said that the cumulative impact of implementation and delivery was “enormous”.²⁰ CHC added that the challenge of joining up of “spaghetti across Government”,²¹ and the cumulative pressure, is what social landlords raise with them more than anything.

62. Shelter Cymru argued that social landlords would need to be resourced properly to achieve the various objectives they were being set, otherwise they might end up having to make difficult trade-offs to ensure they are able to meet their legal obligations. CIEH suggested that more could be done to align work to bring properties up to the new WHQS standards with more general repairs and maintenance work.

63. Several witnesses spoke about the implications for public health. The harmful health impacts caused by hazardous disrepair were emphasised in evidence from Public Health Wales, in particular the significant contribution made by poor quality housing to respiratory disease, cardiovascular illness, injuries, and poor mental health, all of which put avoidable pressure on health services. They noted that hazards can be particularly harmful to children, for example children who live in damp and mouldy conditions have a higher risk of developing asthma, allergies and other respiratory conditions. The health implications were also outlined by tenants who participated in our engagement.

²⁰ Local Government and Housing Committee, 5 March 2026, RoP paragraph 360

²¹ Local Government and Housing Committee, 5 March 2026, RoP paragraph 361

64. Despite the clear link, we heard from the CIEH that there is not “a very joined-up public health approach”²² in which NHS services routinely refer patients to relevant housing teams to help identify and address hazards in their homes.

65. A number of witnesses spoke about incidents of disrepair in the private rented sector (PRS) and the relatively lower quality of housing within that sector. Figures provided by Shelter Cymru show that, between May 2025 and March 2026, over 60 per cent of their damp and disrepair caseload related to homes within the PRS – however they acknowledged that PRS tenants are more likely to approach them as “a first port of call” whereas social housing tenants are more likely to contact their landlord in the first instance and make contact with services like Shelter when other avenues have been exhausted. Welsh Government officials told us that housing standards within the PRS was “an area of interest”²³ for the future, given that new minimum standards for energy efficiency within private rented properties are due to be introduced across England and Wales in the coming years.²⁴ They suggested there might be an opportunity to learn from aspects of the WHQS.²⁵

Our view

66. We are very aware that social landlords are currently dealing with the implications of implementing various Welsh Government policy objectives, including increasing housing supply, improving the quality and energy efficiency of their stock, and preparing for the commencement of legislation, particularly the Homelessness and Social Housing Allocation (Wales) Bill and the Building Safety (Wales) Bill. A great deal is being asked of social landlords, and while we are supportive of the multiple policy objectives, we feel that a better understanding is needed of the cumulative impact these are having. Each policy objective should not be developed in isolation, with consideration given to how different priorities will be delivered in tandem.

67. As emphasised in our reports on draft budgets during the course of the Sixth Senedd, the health and other wellbeing benefits of having a safe home are clear, and as demonstrated by the evidence to this inquiry, hazards and disrepair can lead to physical and mental health issues if not resolved promptly and effectively. We agree that further opportunities to link health services with housing are

²² Local Government and Housing Committee, 5 March 2026, RoP paragraph 92

²³²³ Local Government and Housing Committee, 5 March 2026, RoP paragraph 484

²⁴ Proposals to require private sector properties to achieve EPC C by 2030 are set out in the UK Government’s [Warm Homes Plan](#)

²⁵ Local Government and Housing Committee, 5 March 2026, RoP paragraph 484

needed, particularly where tenants have health conditions that are being caused or exacerbated by housing conditions. We therefore hope that taking a tenant's vulnerability into account when assessing the immediacy of a hazard will lead to the prompt resolution of issues which have harmful health implications. This will need to be carefully monitored as part of evaluating the impact of the new WHQS rule.

68. Finally, we recognise concerns from witnesses about housing quality in the private rented sector, given the higher likelihood of hazardous disrepair in that tenure. We are aware that the UK Government has confirmed a revised Decent Homes Standard, updating minimum standards for rented homes in England, which will apply across both social and private rented housing from 2035. We anticipate that increasing standards within the PRS may be an area of interest for a future Welsh Government, and will highlight this in our legacy report as an issue in need of urgent consideration in the Seventh Senedd.

Conclusion

69. Hazardous disrepair is a serious issue and cases must be dealt with promptly and efficiently for the sake of the tenants living in affected homes. The circumstances that led to the death of Awaab Ishak should never be repeated. We welcome the actions taken by social landlords since then to improve the process of identifying and resolving issues. Further improvements are clearly needed, as demonstrated by the Ombudsman's caseload.

70. We recognise that the Welsh Government is committed to this, and we welcome the development of the new WHQS rule. It will be crucial that this commitment is maintained by the next Welsh Government. Given the swift commencement of the new rule, careful monitoring of its implementation will be needed to assess its effectiveness. We will highlight this as a priority area for further work by our successor committee in the Seventh Senedd.

71. While this work has focused on social housing, we are very aware that evidence demonstrates the need to improve standards within the private rented sector. We believe that addressing standards in the PRS should be a priority for the next Welsh Government and ask that an update is provided to our successor committee on how it plans to do so.