

SP 14

Blaenoriaethau ar gyfer y Pwyllgor Cydraddoldeb,
Llywodraeth Leol a Chymunedau
Priorities for the Equality,
Local Government and Communities Committee
Ymateb gan: Tai Pawb
Response from: Tai Pawb

Who we are

Tai Pawb (housing for all) is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee. The organisation's mission is, "To promote equality and social justice in housing in Wales". It operates 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 Assembly 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.

Tai Pawb's vision is to be:

The primary driver in the promotion of equality and diversity in housing, leading to the reduction of prejudice and disadvantage, as well as changing lives for the better.

A valued partner who supports housing providers and services to recognise, respect and respond appropriately to the diversity of housing needs and characteristics of people living in Wales, including those who are vulnerable and marginalised.

For further information visit: www.taipawb.org

Charity registration no. 1110078

Company No. 5282554

1 Please see below our comments relating to the proposed topics for consideration within the consultation document:

2 EU funding of tackling poverty programmes

4 With the possible implication that Wales may lose substantial amounts of EU funding for a number of programmes, not just those working with tackling poverty, this could be an opportunity to look at the wider impact on the third sector as a whole. An inquiry considering what losing funding will mean for the sector, how it could impact on the demand for statutory services, and ways to ensure that we continue to have a vibrant third sector, would be potentially beneficial.

4 Poverty and Welfare Reform

5 This is a significantly important proposal. It would be useful have an inquiry into the impact of the social housing spare room subsidy measure in particular. It would be of interest to investigate the impact this might have had in relation to rent arrears and homelessness. Additionally it would be worthwhile to consider how the discretionary housing payments have worked across Wales, whether there have been differences in approach dependent on local authority, and how the changes in benefit have impacted on people with specific housing needs related to their protected characteristics. The committee could also consider the availability of suitable housing stock for people to move into. We would also consider it pertinent to assess the impact of recent LHA changes on young people – under 35 (where there are serious risks of an increase in homelessness).

6 In-work poverty

7 It might be beneficial to look at how the availability of affordable housing impacts on in-work poverty. Also it would be useful to investigate if there are any factors which heighten the potential for individuals to be in in-work poverty (such as earning potential and wage levels for people with protected characteristics)

8 The effectiveness of Communities First

9 While a review of this programme could be useful the proposed agenda is very heavily focused on poverty. It might be more appropriate to combine some areas (such as ‘poverty and welfare’ reform with ‘in work poverty’ under one committee inquiry)

10 Post-legislative scrutiny of the new homelessness duties imposed by the Housing (Wales) Act 2014

11 This is of particular importance and could be timely given the post implementation period. A review commissioned by the Welsh Government is currently being undertaken, so the committee might like to consider when they choose to schedule in light of this. There is scope here to undertake a specific line of inquiry (within the larger inquiry) to consider if outcomes are equitable to people from diverse backgrounds and if the providers of housing advice are meeting their statutory duties in relation to accessibility. There is also scope to assess how Welsh Government will be able to monitor the equality impact of the homelessness duties long term (considering that only ethnicity is currently being monitored in relation to the three key parts of the duty and there is a need to monitor disability, sexual orientation and gender reassignment at least).

12 Housing Supply

13 This is of significant importance in Wales given the current shortage of social housing. It would be beneficial to consider how bringing empty properties back into stock, and building more low cost home ownership and intermediate rental homes impacts on meeting the housing needs of older people or those who need aids and adaptations, and how this approach ensures Lifetime Homes compatibility. The current consultation on Housing an Ageing Population in Wales from the Expert Group of the same name may also provide some additional areas of consideration for this inquiry. We would welcome the inquiry to also consider the private rented

sector and home ownership in addition to the social housing sector. We would agree that it would be appropriate to tie in with the expected Right to Buy Bill.

14 Local government reorganisation and reform

15 We support the intention of the Committee to scrutinise any new proposals in relation to this. It would be useful to consider the impact of any re-organisation on those communities experiencing particular poverty and disadvantage and how the re-organisation could help advance equality and equal representation amongst staff.

16 Additional Comments

17 There are currently two substantive pieces of research being undertaken in relation to housing and disability. The Wales Audit Office is undertaking a piece of research considering the impact on well-being (and potential cost savings from) housing adaptations. The Equality and Human Rights Commission will be undertaking an inquiry into housing and disability and independent living, starting in September 2016. The Welsh Government published in 2013 their 'Framework for Action on Independent Living'. Recently the Welsh Government has consulted on a refreshed 'ASD Action Plan'. As there have been at least two substantive action plans or framework there could be opportunity to review the effectiveness of either or both of these. We would be particularly interested in an inquiry into the effectiveness of the 'Framework for Action on Independent Living'.

18 In 2017 the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities will conduct its first examination of the UK, including Wales, looking at the steps it has taken to implement the UN Convention on the Rights of Disabled People. The Committee is a body of experts, nominated and elected by governments, the majority of whom are disabled people.

19 Alternatively if the Committee wished to look at the wider area of disability, and given these substantive pieces of work, it might be appropriate for the Committee to consider 'Life for Disabled People in Wales'.

20 In August 2016, Equality and Human Rights Commission published a report *Healing a divided Britain – the need for a comprehensive race equality strategy*. The Report documents widespread race inequality which risks increasing further racial tensions across the UK. EHRC recommended that governments across the UK develop race equality strategies. The Committee could consider how Welsh Government has ensured race equality across its areas of operation, including education, employment, poverty and housing and how tackling racial inequality could be taken forward.