

Rebecca Evans AC/AM
Y Gweinidog Tai ac Adfywio
Minister for Housing and Regeneration



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-05-790
Ein cyf/Our ref RE/05002/17

David John Rowlands AM
Chair - Petitions committee.
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

government.committee.business@wales.gsi.gov.uk

10 November 2017

Dear David,

Thank you for your letter regarding the petition from Hanin Abou Salem calling for the Welsh Government to tackle rough sleeping.

Preventing rough sleeping and other forms of homelessness is both a Government priority and a matter of deep concern to me. *Prosperity for All*, our national strategy, sets out our view that it is unacceptable that people are forced to sleep on the streets. We are committed to tackling the root causes of homelessness, recognising that prevention plays a major part in avoiding the spiral of decline caused by losing a home.

People living on the streets often have complex needs which services need to recognise and respond to. These issues can severely impact on a person's ability to engage with the services whose support they need. By recognising these needs, services can adapt to address the root causes. We are supporting this approach by promoting the training of front line staff to ensure that they are able to recognise the effects of trauma, and best to help people living with these problems to find and keep a home.

Our reform of homelessness legislation has led the UK nations in bringing a preventative approach to the duties placed on local authorities. Since April 2015, new duties under the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 include the obligation to take reasonable steps to prevent homelessness for people who are threatened with losing their home within 56 days.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

The legislation includes duties for people who are defined as homeless - including those sleeping rough - and a requirement for local authorities to take reasonable steps to help a homeless person secure accommodation. This legislation provides more help to more people than the previous legislation, and does so in a more constructive and timely manner.

In order to enable local authorities to perform these duties, the Welsh Government provided three years of transitional funding, totalling over £10 million.

We are pleased as a Government with the progress made up to this point in terms of early intervention and prevention, but recognise there is far more to do to help people who are sleeping rough and may have very complex needs.

The Welsh Government's homelessness prevention grant currently supports a range of services which includes rough sleeper outreach, day services, night shelters, youth homelessness prevention, and help accessing private sector accommodation. This grant of £5 million funds close to 70 different projects across the country including 'Streetlink', a service which enables members of the public to inform local outreach teams of a location where they believe a person is sleeping rough.

Over the summer, the Welsh Government announced an additional £2.6 million for projects to further improve services to help people off the street with a particular focus on tackling rough sleeping and youth homelessness. These projects include several "Housing First" approaches which aim to support people to move straight off the street into secure homes, avoiding the need for hostels where they may have had poor experiences in the past due to their complex needs. Support is provided to help ensure the individual is able to sustain the tenancy and receives the help they need to keep a home.

This additional funding will also be used to improve the quality of, and extend the availability of, emergency provision in Cardiff, Wrexham and Newport where levels of rough sleeping are known to be particularly high.

The draft budget for 2018/19 demonstrates our commitment to tackling homelessness. An additional £6m in the Revenue Support Grant for 2018/19 and 2019/20 will provide long term funding for local authorities to continue homelessness prevention activity previously supported via transitional funding. This money is in addition to the £6 million already in the settlement from this year (17/18) in recognition of changes to the funding of temporary accommodation management fees, and is intended to build on the progress to date in implementing Part 2 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014.

Overall, this boost to core funding for homelessness will strengthen implementation of the legislation and recognises the increasing pressures on local authorities with rising homelessness, welfare cuts and a difficult housing market. In addition, we are increasing our homelessness budget by £4million a year for the next two years to support the drive to end homelessness, with funding for specific work to tackle our priorities - including ending the need for anyone to sleep rough.

A great deal of work has been done by Welsh Government and the housing sector in Wales to reduce homelessness. However, UK Government austerity measures, including welfare reform, have made the landscape far more challenging than would otherwise be the case. Full roll out of universal credit in Wales is likely to put further pressure on individuals and on services.

Dialogue with local authorities and third sector providers about the challenges ahead is ongoing. Only by working collaboratively can we build on our achievements to date, and continue to make a positive difference to people's lives. Our national advisory Rough Sleepers Working Group has been considering the recent rise in rough sleeping and how we can best tackle it. They will shortly provide me with their recommendations on the priorities for addressing this issue, and I will consider this carefully.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rebecca Evans". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'R'.

Rebecca Evans AC/AM

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Minister for Housing and Regeneration