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Y Gweinidog Tai ac Adfywio
Minister for Housing and Regeneration



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref: SF/CS/1028/14

Christine Chapman AM
Chair
Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee
National Assembly for Wales

08 July 2014

Dear Christine

In year Scrutiny Session: 19 June 2014

Thank you for your letter of 26 June following my evidence session on 19 June.

During the session we agreed that I would write to you on the following issues:

Affordable Housing

The definition of affordable housing in Wales, used for the purposes of the data collection for the 10,000 affordable housing target, is included within Planning Policy Wales – Technical Advice Note 2:-

“The definition of ‘affordable housing’ for the purpose of the land use planning system as described in this Technical Advice Note is housing where there are secure mechanisms in place to ensure that it is accessible to those who cannot afford market housing, both on first occupation and for subsequent occupiers. However, it is recognised that some schemes may provide for stair casing to full ownership and where this is the case there must be secure arrangements in place to ensure the recycling of capital receipts to provide replacement affordable housing. Affordable housing includes:

- *Social rented housing;*
- *Intermediate housing.*

Social rented housing is that provided by local authorities and registered social landlords. Intermediate housing is that where prices or rents are above those of social rent but below market housing prices or rents”

Whilst the planning policy definition is broadly the same in the UK Government’s Communities and Local Government (CLG) National Planning Policy Framework, the approach to funding affordable housing development is very different.

In the UK the Affordable Homes Programme is described by the CLG as being available for “Affordable Rent” with some for affordable home ownership, supported housing and in some circumstances, social rent. They go on to describe Affordable Rent as requiring a rent of no more than 80% of the local market rent. As a result of the direction of this programme the vast majority of properties developed under this programme are at a much higher, intermediate rent, which is higher than social rent.

Whilst the Welsh Governments Social Housing Grant programme does include the option for intermediate rent at or below 80% of local market rents (but at or below local housing allowance), the vast majority of the programme supports the delivery of social rented housing, which is provided for those in greatest housing need.

Welsh Housing Quality Standard achievement

All the local authorities have up to date business plans which show achievement of WHQS by 2020 or before. These plans, together with annual statistical returns on WHQS progress, are carefully monitored to ensure the target is met. The table below sets out completion dates: -

Local Housing Authority	Stock at March 2013	Achievement of WHQS
Cardiff	13,661	2012
Anglesey	3,806	2012
Pembrokeshire	5,670	2013
Denbighshire	3,458	2014
Carmarthenshire	9,073	2015
Vale of Glamorgan	3,911	2017
Powys	5,407	2018
Caerphilly ¹	10,912	2019/20
Wrexham	11,322	2020
Swansea	13,590	2020
Flintshire	7,402	2020

¹ We are currently assessing the latest business plan for Caerphilly and details so far indicate that they will still meet WHQS by 2019/2020

Help to Buy Wales by Local Authority

I attach a spreadsheet which includes a detailed breakdown of the scheme by local authority.

Intermediate Care Fund Plans and Projects

The Intermediate Care Fund is designed to promote new ways of working and integrate provision of services between health, social services and housing providers. £15 million of the £50 million budget relates to capital projects and forms part of my portfolio. All six regions submitted strong bids for new and innovative proposals which will require close monitoring to ensure they deliver the outcomes aspired to of long lasting service change and improved outcomes for people who need our support. I have attached an Annex which sets out details of projects.

Section 180 Review of the Homelessness Grant Programme

The Housing White Paper (2012) committed to a major review of the Section 180, Homelessness Grant Programme. The purpose of the review was to ensure the deployment of funding is in line with the prevention goals of the new legislation. The review process has now been completed. My officials are working on the recommendations and are meeting with organisations individually to build a clear picture which will, in turn inform my decisions on changes to some projects.

In addition to the reductions as a result of individual projects, all organisations funded through the grant have been advised of a reduction of 3% from 2013/14 levels of funding, with effect from 1st October 2014. All of the funding released as a result of the review and the flat rate reduction will be reinvested in line with the prevention agenda of the Housing (Wales) Bill.

Evaluation of the Supporting People Programme

We have started a programme of audit to ensure that Supporting People funding is being spent in accordance with Grant Conditions and is providing value for money. As part of this work Welsh Government officials have reviewed two local authorities and one provider. Two of the final reports of these reviews are in preparation, and one has been submitted to me for consideration.

Overall there has been good evidence of services being reviewed by both the authorities and the provider. In one of the authorities and in the provider case there was clear evidence of changes being made to a service to ensure it was the best use of funding. This work will continue and all authorities will be reviewed in a similar way as part of the wider review and evaluation of the Supporting People programme. The evidence from the audits is being used to shape the work of local authorities and Regional Collaborative Committees.

You have also asked for more detail on the subjects below.

Tenant Participation

I have agreed the majority of the recommendations set out in the 2014 research study *Support for Tenant Participation*. I am monitoring progress on the implementation of the recommendations by stakeholders, including Welsh Tenants, TPAS, social landlords, the Welsh Local Government Association, and Community Housing Cymru.

The recommendation to tender a national contract for support to the Welsh Government is perhaps the most significant recommendation in the report. Its rationale is understood and broadly supported. However, procuring such a contract will take time and I aim to do it in consultation with stakeholders. Meanwhile, we are core-funding to support tenant participation and continue to work with TPAS and Welsh Tenants on the most effective way to use and to monitor this funding.

We envisage core funding remaining in place until a contract is able to be tendered. Future years' core funding would not be immune to further reductions as all Welsh Government funding programmes are under pressure.

Home Adaptations

As regards the Review of Home Adaptations and the Framework for Action on Independent Living, the review of adaptations is underway.

The contract for the review was let in February 2014. A consortium involving Shelter, Tai Pawb and Cardiff Metropolitan University, amongst others, will explore and test potential changes to the structural and delivery mechanisms for independent living adaptations. Specifically, it will explore options for a system which can achieve the Welsh Government's goal of consistently accessible, good quality adaptations delivered in all areas of Wales. The aim is to ensure that adaptations can be delivered more speedily to those who need them and, in doing so, help to reduce inherent inequalities in the current system by ensuring joined up solutions, prevention and early intervention activity. The research team is currently gathering evidence before formulating recommendations with a view to submitting their final report in the autumn.

Framework for Action on Independent Living

I note the Committee's comments about the Framework and am fully apprised of the need to ensure that the review takes account of the Framework. I have asked officials to remind the research team to keep the Framework in mind when developing recommendations. I look forward to seeing the final report and will make sure the Committee is provided with a copy.

I trust this information assists the Committee's considerations and I look forward to continuing to work closely with it.



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Annex

Intermediate Care Fund Projects

Cardiff

A 'Smart House' has been created to raise awareness and provide an opportunity for older people and their family to see and try out what can be provided in the home environment. It will showcase the potential for independent living to prospective clients, and can also be used for staff training. It aims to encourage more independence, and an awareness of what can be done in the home, without care.

Cardiff and the Vale

A new project will be piloting preventative intervention through the Gateway service. The project will pilot a preventative approach by training a network of well positioned stakeholders (including GPs, Community Alarm Wardens, Care and Repair staff) to identify appropriate people to be referred to the Gateway. The region is also developing a range of preventative and accommodation solutions to support older people at times of crisis (e.g. Hospital Discharge) or in response to the emerging physical requirements of older people. It will also be driven forward through the establishment of Interim Care Flats supported by care provider staff, and additional care support team. Preventative intervention and enablement services: Including working with Care and Repair and RNIB to deliver integrated services.

Cwm Taf

The integrated '@home' service will make better use of existing resources, as well as harness additional resources in the programme. The outcome will be more people offered support, care and treatment at home. This is as part of its "create a whole system approach", promoting healthy interdependence for older people.

Also in Cwm Taf, work will enhance housing options and adaptations services. This will involve placing housing, people's need for well-planned accommodation and/or adaptations as a critical feature of people being and feeling safe to remain in their own home.

North Wales

Step up and step down provision will be increased and the Rapid Response Adaptations Service will be expanded to minor adaptations and repairs for individuals, focussing on timely discharge and admission.

In Anglesey two Community Hubs will also be developed on two designated sheltered accommodation complexes.

Gwynedd will pilot co-located health and social care offices in acute hospitals to aid communication, reduce handovers and share capacity as key outcomes.

In Wrexham "Wander Guards" will be installed within all council sheltered units to enable independent living for tenants with dementia.

In Denbighshire a Sheltered Housing Unit will be refurbished to pilot a range of services, including step up and step down provision, provision of respite for carers, and an alternative setting whilst adaptations are carried out at home. This will be supported by a 7 days support multidisciplinary team from Enhanced Care at home, Community Therapies and Reablement.

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