

#HousingMattersWales

# Housing Matters

## Campaign pack 2019



End  
evictions

Expand  
Housing First

Support  
VAWDASV  
survivors

Use your voice  
- help us campaign  
to increase  
homelessness and  
housing-related support  
funding in Wales



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# Why do we need the Housing Matters campaign?

In advance of the Welsh Government's budget for 2020/21 we are calling on Ministers to increase funding for the Housing Support Grant and ensure that services have the resource and capacity to meet the support and accommodation needs of people who are experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness in Wales.

Local authorities, third sector support providers and social landlords have worked incredibly hard over the past few years to make savings within their services. Costs of delivery have grown, mainly due to inflation and complexity of demand, but funding has not. This is set against a backdrop of increased homelessness and people presenting with a more challenging combination of co-occurring issues such as mental health problems, substance use problems and the impact of trauma.

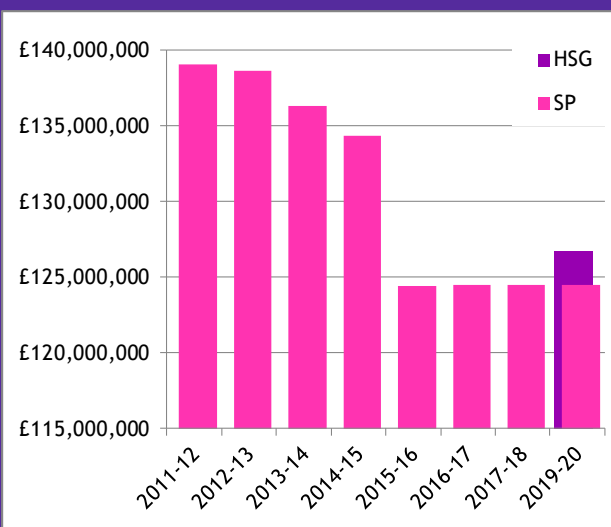
Our members tell us that it is increasingly difficult within current budget constraints to deliver person centred, trauma informed services to meet the needs of people requiring support. Without additional investment in the Housing Support Grant in the next Welsh Government budget, there is a risk that services will not have the capacity to meet people's needs - and homelessness could get much worse.

## Decreasing funding

This graph shows how the Supporting People budget has reduced over recent years, from £139million in 2011/12 to £124million in 2019/20<sup>1</sup>.

Taking into account inflation, £139million in 2012 would equate to over £161million in 2018<sup>2</sup>.

This equates to a real terms funding cut of £37million from the Supporting People budget between 2012 and 2018.



1 In 2019/20 this formed part of the overall Housing Support Grant budget of £126.8m, but we know that the SP element was £124.5m due to the Welsh Government / Plaid Cymru budget deal.

2 Using the Bank of England inflation figures

## Why else do we need an increase?

### Ending evictions into homelessness from social housing

The scale of investment needed to reduce evictions and end evictions into homelessness is difficult to quantify, owing to the complexity of issue which can lead to risk of eviction. However, 4700 households were in 13 or more weeks of arrears in social housing as of 31st March 2018, a risk factor in tenancy sustainment<sup>1</sup>. Using cost figures from the Wales Audit Office report into the Supporting People Programme, an additional £14.5 million investment would fund intensive support for these 4700 tenants, addressing the causes behind rent arrears and preventing potential homelessness<sup>2</sup>.

£14.5  
million

### Scaling up Housing First

The Crisis report 'Implementing Housing First across England, Scotland and Wales'<sup>3</sup> provides an estimate of how many people in Wales would require Housing First, bearing in mind that this model is targeted people who have high, multiple and complex needs and/or repeated experience of rough sleeping. The research estimates that between 600 and 1100 people in Wales need this intervention. Using the costs from the Liverpool feasibility study<sup>4</sup> and research about the cost of Housing First in England, we have calculated that this would cost between £6,388,200 and £11,711,700 to implement per annum in Wales.

£6-11  
million

### Providing refuge and support for VAWDASV survivors

Last year, 512 survivors were unable to be supported in refuges because of a lack of service space, capacity or resources. Welsh Women's Aid also estimates that 77% of children who experienced domestic abuse in the past year did not receive support from a specialist service. We have calculated the cost to provide support to survivors both in refuge and in the community in Wales at an additional £13,088,251.

£13  
million

### And another thing... Redistribution

Over the last year, the Welsh Government has been developing a new approach to redistribution. This has understandably caused a huge amount of anxiety for the local authority areas which are likely to lose funding. The services operating in these areas are currently being used by people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness, domestic abuse, mental health crises and many other issues. Any cuts could lead to these services being closed and people being unable to access the support they need. It is widely accepted that redistribution is best done at a time when the overall budget is increasing, so that no single area faces a cut which would lead to much-needed services disappearing. As a result, we believe that the Welsh Government needs to inject enough funds into the overall Housing Support Grant budget to enable the areas which have historically lost out to receive the funds they need, while avoiding cuts to services in other local authorities.

1 <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Housing/Social-Housing-Rent-Arrears/tenanciesinarrearsat31march-by-year-provider-duration>

2 <https://www.audit.wales/system/files/publications/Supporting-People-2017-English.pdf> (page 7)

3 [https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/239451/implementing\\_housing\\_first\\_across\\_england\\_scotland\\_and\\_wales\\_2018.pdf](https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/239451/implementing_housing_first_across_england_scotland_and_wales_2018.pdf)

4 [https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/237545/housing\\_first\\_feasibility\\_study\\_for\\_the\\_liverpool\\_city\\_region\\_2017.pdf](https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/237545/housing_first_feasibility_study_for_the_liverpool_city_region_2017.pdf)

## What can you do?

While Cymorth Cymru, Community Housing Cymru and other partners will be leading the national campaign, we know that your contributions on a local level will be crucial. Politicians are more likely to act if they can see how an issue will affect people in their own constituencies. There are lots of ways that you can get involved...

**Contact your local and regional Assembly Members:** Encourage your staff and service users to email their Assembly Members and highlight the importance of ring-fencing homelessness and housing related support funding for vulnerable people in their local area. See our 'top tips' on page 5 and find out who your AMs are [here](#).

**Arrange for your AMs to visit your services:** Invite your local and regional Assembly Members to visit your homelessness and housing-related support projects, meet your staff and meet people who use your services. Show them how these services have transformed people's lives - and that funding must be protected.

**Spread the word on social media:** Most Assembly Members are on Twitter and Facebook - encourage your staff and service users to use social media to highlight the importance of ring-fencing this funding.

- Use [#HousingMattersWales](#) hashtag in all of your tweets
- Tweet the Housing Matters graphics we have sent you
- Pin a tweet about the campaign to the top of your twitter feed
- Tweet photos of your team and local AMs supporting the campaign

**Speak to your local newspaper or radio station:** Local newspapers and radio stations are also a good platform to highlight the positive impact of homelessness and housing related support services on people's lives - and the importance of protecting funding. Have a chat with local journalists and see if they want to cover this issue.

### Key messages:

- The Housing Support Grant is the Welsh Government's principal funding stream for preventing homelessness and supporting independent living. Every year it helps more than 60,000 people to avoid homelessness, escape abuse, live in their own homes and thrive in their communities.
- In addition to changing lives, the Housing Support Grant also reduces pressure on a myriad of public services, from health and social services to criminal justice.
- A number of reports have evidenced the positive financial impact of these services in the UK, including research for Carmarthenshire Council, which estimated that every £1 invested in Supporting People services delivers £2.30 of savings to housing, health, social care and community safety.
- We appreciate the cross-party support and political efforts to protect Supporting People funding in recent years. However, services have now reached a tipping point - and a cash flat settlement in 2020/21 will not be enough.
- Without additional investment in the Housing Support Grant in the next Welsh Government budget, there is a risk that services will not have the capacity to meet people's needs - and homelessness could get much worse.

## HSG benefits to other public services

While the Housing Support Grant is primarily focused on the prevention and alleviation of homelessness, we know that it delivers a range of benefits to other public services.

### Benefits to local authority housing and homelessness services

- Enables local authorities to discharge their duties under the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 through the provision of tenancy support and supported housing.
- Provides emergency accommodation for people who are homeless or fleeing domestic abuse.
- Prevents evictions, reducing pressure on homelessness departments.
- Provides people with housing and support so they can continue to live independently in their own homes.



### Benefits to health and social services

- Reduces demand on GP, hospital and ambulance services.
- Helps people to better manage their mental health and avoid hospitalisation.
- Prevents delayed discharges from hospital.
- Helps people to overcome substance use issues.
- Prevents older people from needing residential care.
- Enables people with learning disabilities to live independently in their communities.
- Supports many parents and families, can reduce safeguarding risks and reduce pressure on children's services.



### Benefits to community safety and criminal justice

- Reduces re-offending, improving community safety.
- Helps families to escape domestic abuse by providing accommodation and support.
- Helps people to overcome substance use issues.



### Benefits to education and the economy

- Support children to succeed at school by providing safe and stable family environments.
- Support often marginalised people to (re)access education, volunteering, training and work opportunities, often through their own social enterprises.



## Top tips: Talking to your AMs

The Housing Matters campaign is a golden opportunity to give local politicians first-hand insight into the positive impact of homelessness and housing-related support services. Here are a few simple pointers to bear in mind when approaching your local and regional Assembly Members this summer:

### ★ Treat them as individuals:

Find out what their political interests are - do they have an interest in a particular client group or issue associated with the Supporting People Programme? Or can you describe how Supporting People reduces pressure on services they are passionate about, such as health and social care? Doing your homework will help you have the greatest impact.

### ★ Be clear about what you're asking for:

Your AMs will be lobbied by lots of organisations this summer - so it's important that we are clear about what we want them to do. We want them to show their support for #HousingMattersWales and our proposal for a ring-fenced homelessness and housing-related support grant. Ask them to:

- Write to the Welsh Government and ask them to support our proposal for a ring-fenced homelessness and housing-related support grant.
- Tweet their support using [#HousingMattersWales](#)
- Pose for a photo with you and Housing Matters campaign materials
- Make a speech in the Senedd about this issue

### ★ Be helpful and authoritative:

Be a good source of information and advice - AMs have to deal with a wide range of issues, so they appreciate any supporting information that helps them to make effective representations on behalf of their constituents. In addition, they often appreciate the opportunity to meet and hear from front-line staff and service users, to understand first hand experiences.

### ★ Be persistent:

AMs are busy people and may not be able to accept your invitations due to prior diary commitments. Don't give up - invite them to something else or try something new. Make it clear that you are keen to meet them. During the summer most AMs will be back in their constituencies, so it's a great time to arrange a visit. During term time, Mondays and Fridays are the best days.

### ★ Develop relationships with their staff:

Staff members can be very influential and often prepare briefings and advice for their Assembly Member. It's worth developing good relations with staff and taking the time to explain the issues to them.

Remember, you can find out who your AMs are [here](#).

## Top tips: Case studies

Case studies will be crucial during the Housing Matters campaign. They offer an insight into the human impact of services, alongside the hard statistics that we use to demonstrate the reach of the programme.

We encourage you to send us case studies that highlight the challenges faced by people and the impact that homelessness and housing-related support services have had on their lives. We'd love to receive your case studies this year - and it would be great if you could try to include the following information:

- Name and age (but case studies can be anonymous).
- Which local authority area they are from (so we can link it to AMs).
- A brief summary of the challenges they have encountered (e.g. homelessness, health problems or disability, care leaver, experience of domestic abuse etc.).
- The type of Supporting People or homelessness service they used.
- The impact that these services have had on their lives (e.g. improving confidence and self esteem, improving their health and wellbeing, enabling them to live independently, helping them to escape domestic abuse, overcome financial problems, maintain a tenancy, avoid eviction, overcome substance misuse problems, or access education, training and employment).
- Whether accessing the homelessness or housing-related support service has reduced pressure on other public services (e.g. homelessness services, health services, social services, criminal justice system, social security.)
- Whether they would be happy to speak to the media (e.g. television or radio) about their experiences.

### Contact info:

Please don't hesitate to get in touch if:

- You have any questions or would like any more information
- You would like to send us a case study
- You want to let us know about a visit or meeting with a politician.

### Cymorth Cymru

Contact Katie Dalton, Oliver Townsend or Jordan Brewer:  
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### Community Housing Cymru

Contact Will Atkinson:  
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### Welsh Women's Aid

Contact Tina Reece or Gwendolyn Sterk:  
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