



## Public Policy Statement

### Housing

February 2017

#### Summary

The housing needs of people may change as they get older, so it is essential that older people have access to a range of good quality housing options and services that meet their needs. People must be able to live safe, independent and active lives in the setting most appropriate to them, and their home or the location may need to change to adapt to their changing needs. The impact of people living longer on the availability of accessible homes and the management of home improvements are key issues.

Poor and inaccessible housing conditions can have profound implications for our ageing population. The design, location and condition of a home can impact on the ability of older people to live healthy and independent lives. Accessible housing is essential for older people to be able to live independently for longer, and the availability of community support networks is important for their wellbeing and quality of life.

The overall need for housing remains high, but the supply of new homes is lagging well behind demand. The Welsh Government has pledged to work in partnership to deliver an additional 20,000 affordable homes.<sup>1</sup> The age of housing stock means that many existing homes need improvement. The Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) has led to improvements in social housing, and we believe the commitment to achieving the WHQS should also be extended to the private rented sector and to all new homes being built in Wales.

The Welsh Government established an Expert Group on Housing an Ageing Population in Wales to develop practicable and deliverable proposals to inform the Welsh Government's policy approach to housing an ageing population. The Group's report addresses 5 key themes: understanding the housing requirements of older people; supporting the right choices – to 'stay put' or 'move on'; living with confidence in older age – covering design and technology; a planning system which reflects the needs of our ageing population; making housing more affordable and incentivising change.<sup>2</sup>

Specialist retirement housing, including sheltered accommodation and extra-care housing, can offer basic support for many older people allowing them to live

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<sup>1</sup> Welsh Government (2016) Taking Wales Forward 2016-2021.

<sup>2</sup> Welsh Government (2017) Written Statement – Report by the Expert Group on Housing an Ageing Population. <http://gov.wales/about/cabinet/cabinetstatements/2017/housinganageingpopulation/?lang=en>

independently for longer within a safe and secure environment. Further investment is needed in the provision of specialist housing, as it is often cost-effective over the long term because it reduces demand on residential care homes and hospitals, and can provide community living and associated benefits to quality of life. All forms of retirement housing need to be built within age friendly communities, to ensure that residents have full access to public or community transport and local services and facilities that support independence and wellbeing.

Older people need to have access to information about housing options, aids and adaptations, and related financial information, to help them make an informed decision about where they want to live in later life. Such advice should be promoted before retirement to allow forward planning, greater choice, and to facilitate independent living.

Accessible housing is imperative to older people being able to live independently for longer. Adapting homes to make them suitable for the needs and capabilities of the older occupant reduces disability and risk of accidents, increases independence, and improves health and wellbeing. However, many people have to wait long periods to receive home adaptations. We believe that improved efficiency is needed in the delivery of publicly funded home adaptations services for older people.

We want to see all new homes in Wales built to Lifetime Home Standards,<sup>3</sup> making them suitable for people of all ages, and which will be easier and less costly to adapt if people's needs change.

Older people are most likely to suffer fuel poverty; a contributing factor is that they tend to live in older, energy inefficient properties. We welcome the Welsh Government's £104 million investment over the next four years to increase the number of energy efficient homes.<sup>4</sup> However, the Welsh Government's pledge to eradicate fuel poverty by 2018 will be unachievable without a new fuel poverty strategy that is underpinned by further investment to ensure all older people live in warm, affordable homes.

It is important that local authorities and other housing providers are aware of additional barriers that older people with multiple protected characteristics may encounter when accessing housing services. Older lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people should be able to access the variety of housing options and support models available for older people knowing that they will be accepted and can live in an inclusive, safe environment. Local authorities should ensure that language needs are effectively addressed in the provision of information and advice for older black and minority ethnic people on housing and housing support options. In exercising their duty to provide sites for Gypsies and Travellers where a need has been identified, local authorities should ensure good access to community services and healthcare.

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<sup>3</sup> Lifetime Homes <http://www.lifetimehomes.org.uk/>

<sup>4</sup> Welsh Government (2017) £104 million to heat Wales' most vulnerable households. 14 February 2017. <http://gov.wales/newsroom/environmentandcountryside/2017/170214-104million-to-heat-wales-most-vulnerable-households/?lang=en>

### **Summary of public policy proposals:**

- The Welsh Government should ensure that commitment to achieving the Welsh Housing Quality Standard is extended to the private rented sector and to all new housing built in Wales.
- The Welsh Government must further invest in specialist retirement housing to help reduce the demand on residential care whilst promoting independence for older people.
- Local authorities need to ensure that all forms of retirement housing are built within age friendly communities, to ensure that residents have full access to public or community transport and local services and facilities that support independence and wellbeing.
- UK, Welsh and local governments need to provide information on housing options, aids and adaptations, and related financial information, which should be promoted before retirement to allow forward planning, greater choice, and to facilitate independent living.
- Local authorities must ensure that basic repairs and home adaptations are provided in all areas of Wales within a reasonable time period.
- The Welsh Government should ensure that all new homes in Wales are built to Lifetime Home Standards, making them suitable for people of all ages, and which will be easier and less costly to adapt if people's needs change.
- The Welsh Government must produce a new fuel poverty strategy and provide additional investment in energy efficiency to ensure all older people live in warm, affordable homes.
- Local authorities must take the needs of older people with multiple protected characteristics into account in housing policy and service delivery.
- Local authorities and other providers of housing services must understand and address the additional barriers that older lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people may encounter when accessing housing services, and support their needs.
- Local authorities should ensure that language needs are effectively addressed in the provision of information and advice for older black and minority ethnic people on housing and housing support options.
- In exercising their duty to provide sites for Gypsies and Travellers where a need has been identified, local authorities should ensure good access to community services and healthcare.

## Housing

This policy statement covers:

- Housing policy and legislation
- Housing options for older people
- Home adaptations
- Fuel poverty and energy efficiency
- Diversity issues in housing policy

Note: Broader fuel poverty issues are covered in Age Cymru's public policy statement on 'Fuel poverty'.

## Public policy proposals

### Housing policy and legislation

The majority of people over 65 in Wales are home owners. 2011 Census data show that 77.6% of people over the age of 65 in Wales owned or had shared ownership of their property (this includes ownership with a mortgage and part owned, part rented). The Census data also revealed that 8.8% of people over the age of 65 in Wales had a social rented tenure and 6.5% were living in the private rented sector or living rent free.<sup>5</sup>

The impact of people living longer on the availability of homes and the management of improvements and services are key issues. It is vitally important that older people are supported to continue to live independently for as long as possible in communities across Wales.

The overall need for housing remains high, but the supply of new homes is lagging well behind demand.<sup>6</sup> The Welsh Government's Programme for Government includes a pledge to work in partnership to deliver an additional 20,000 affordable homes.<sup>7</sup>

The age of housing stock means that many existing homes need improvement.<sup>8</sup> The Strategy for Older People highlights that worsening housing conditions are independently associated with deterioration in health, and that adapting homes reduces disability and accident. The outcome the Strategy aims to achieve by 2023 is 'older people have access to housing and services that supports their needs and promote independence'.

Accessible housing is imperative to people being able to live independently for longer. In Wales, the legacy of poor design and build quality increases the need for

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<sup>5</sup> ONS Census data cited in: PPIW (2015) Housing for Older People in Wales: An Evidence Review. June 2015.

<sup>6</sup> Welsh Government (2013) Housing (Wales) Bill. Explanatory Memorandum.

<sup>7</sup> Welsh Government (2016) Taking Wales Forward 2016-2021.

<sup>8</sup> Welsh Government (2013) Housing (Wales) Bill. Explanatory Memorandum.

adaptations. Private sector new-build properties are not usually big enough to accommodate wheelchairs. Older properties can be bigger, cheaper and may be easier to adapt, but the hurdle is the cost of adaptation.<sup>9</sup>

The Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) has led to improvements in social housing. The WHQS aims to ensure that all homes provided by local authorities and housing associations are safe and secure and offer modern amenities. As at 31 March 2016, 79% of all social housing dwellings met the WHQS, which is a rise of 8 percentage points on the previous year. The Welsh Government has set a target for all social landlords to meet and maintain the WHQS by 2020.<sup>10</sup> We believe that the commitment to achieving the WHQS should also be extended to the private rented sector and to all new housing in Wales.

In December 2015 the Welsh Government established an Expert Group on Housing an Ageing Population in Wales (hereafter referred to as the 'Expert Group on Housing'). The purpose of this time-bound Group was to develop practicable and deliverable proposals to inform the Welsh Government's policy approach to housing an ageing population.<sup>11</sup> The Group presented its report<sup>12</sup> to the Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children. The report addresses 5 key themes which can be broadly summarised as follows:

- Understanding the housing requirements of older people
- Supporting the right choices – to 'stay put' or 'move on'
- Living with confidence in older age – covering design and technology
- A planning system which reflects the needs of our ageing population
- Making housing more affordable and incentivising change.

The report proposes a number of actions for Welsh Government, local authorities, housing associations as well as commercial house builders.<sup>13</sup>

The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 is Wales' first housing Act. Key elements of the Act include: reforms and increased regulation of the private rented sector; the reform of homelessness law; placing a duty on local authorities to provide sites for Gypsies and Travellers where a need has been identified; the introduction of standards for local authorities on rents, service charges and quality of accommodation; giving local

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<sup>9</sup> Welsh Government (2013) Framework for Action on Independent Living.

<sup>10</sup> Welsh Government news (2016) Communities and Children Secretary welcomes figures that show how homes are improving lives. Thursday 13 October 2016. <http://gov.wales/newsroom/housing-and-regeneration/2016/161013-communities-and-children-secretary-welcomes-figures-that-show-how-homes-are-improving-lives/?lang=en>

<sup>11</sup> Welsh Government (2017) Written Statement – Report by the Expert Group on Housing an Ageing Population.

<sup>12</sup> Welsh Government (2017) Our Housing AGEnda: meeting the aspirations of older people in Wales. A report by the Expert Group on Housing an Ageing Population in Wales. January 2017.

<sup>13</sup> Welsh Government (2017) Written Statement – Report by the Expert Group on Housing an Ageing Population.

authorities the power to charge more than the standard rate of council tax on long-term empty homes; and assisting the provision of co-operative housing.<sup>14</sup>

The Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016<sup>15</sup> overhauls the law for renting from either a private or social landlord in Wales. All landlords operating in Wales must now become registered. Rent Smart Wales<sup>16</sup> is a new service which aims to make the service transparent for landlords, managing agents and tenants.<sup>17</sup>

The Welsh Government recently consulted on new compulsory quality standards for all social landlord homes. Over 200,000 council or housing association homes across Wales and all new homes built with government grant will have to meet the standards. These cover room sizes, accessibility, energy efficiency and security. The aim is that all homes should be of good quality and meet the needs of tenants. The consultation included a target for all new homes meeting the Lifetime Homes standards; however, this will only be applied to homes developed by social landlords.<sup>18</sup> We believe that these standards should also be extended to the private rented sector and to all new housing in Wales.

The rights of mobile home owners are covered by specific mobile home legislation, the Mobile Homes (Wales) Act 2013. Many mobile home owners are older people, spending their retirement on a mobile home site for lifestyle as well as financial reasons. Research published by the UK and Welsh Governments in 2002 estimated that 68% of residents on mobile home sites were aged over 60, compared to 37% of the population as a whole.<sup>19</sup> Although mobile home owners own their own home, a site operator owns the land on which it stands, and so rent is paid for the pitch. The Act is designed to improve regulation of the industry, so that conditions on mobile home sites are improved and the rights of residents are better protected.<sup>20</sup>

### **Public policy proposal:**

- The Welsh Government should ensure that commitment to achieving the Welsh Housing Quality Standard is extended to the private rented sector and to all new housing built in Wales.

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<sup>14</sup> Welsh Government (2014) Housing (Wales) Act 2014. 17 September 2014.

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/housing-and-regeneration/legislation/housingbill/?lang=en>

<sup>15</sup> Welsh Government (2016) Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016 <http://gov.wales/topics/housing-and-regeneration/legislation/rentingbill/?lang=en>

<sup>16</sup> Rent Smart Wales <https://www.rentsmart.gov.wales/en/about/> Accessed 21/2/17

<sup>17</sup> Age Cymru (2016) EnvisAGE Towards an age friendly Wales. Article by C Boswell and J Beauchamp: Housing options for older people in Wales. <http://www.ageuk.org.uk/cymru/policy/age-cymru-policy-publications-1/envisage-1/>

<sup>18</sup> Age Cymru (2016) EnvisAGE Towards an age friendly Wales. Article by C. Boswell and J. Beauchamp: Housing options for older people in Wales.

<sup>19</sup> Mobile Homes (Wales) Act 2013. Explanatory memorandum.

<sup>20</sup> Welsh Government (2014) Mobile Homes Act. Updated 03/11/14. <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/housing-and-regeneration/legislation/mobile-homes-act/?lang=en> Accessed 20/2/2017.

## Housing options for older people

The housing needs of people may change as they get older, so it is important that older people have access to a range of good quality housing options and services that meet their needs. People must be able to live safe, independent and active lives in the setting most appropriate to them. Their home or the location may need to change to adapt to changing needs.

Older people generally wish to remain in their own homes<sup>21</sup> and it is vital that they have access to services that help them to adapt and improve their homes to help them to live independently for as long as possible (see home adaptations below).

The Expert Group on Housing reported that some older people were worried about how they would cope with the on-going maintenance of their home and garden; others were anxious about 'staying put' and ageing in a place where there was inadequate public transport, where they no longer felt safe or where they struggled to get out because of mobility issues.<sup>22</sup>

Some older people would welcome the option to move to housing that better suits their needs, such as all rooms on one level; easy to heat and maintain; adapted as appropriate; and close to shops and services. However, older people felt there were very few opportunities to make this move as new housing developments mostly do not cater for the needs of older people.<sup>23</sup> Such developments may be on the outskirts of towns without easy access to public or community transport links or to local services and facilities, which can lead to social isolation. 'Home' can mean community and neighbourhood<sup>24</sup> as well as housing. These networks can significantly contribute to a good quality of life whilst retaining high levels of autonomy.<sup>25</sup> Older people may have emotional attachments established to family homes that are no longer suitable, and for social reasons may not wish to move. Local alternatives may be limited and would lead to a loss of local community support networks within established local communities. The outcome of this is that people may stay in houses that no longer suit their needs.

Specialist retirement housing, including sheltered accommodation and extra-care housing, can offer basic support for many older people allowing them to live independently for longer within a safe and secure environment. Further investment is needed in the provision of specialist housing, as it is often cost-effective over the long term because it reduces demand on residential care homes and hospitals, and can

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<sup>21</sup> Welsh Government (2012) Consultation document. The Strategy for Older People in Wales. Number: WG16742. 25 October 2012.

<sup>22</sup> Welsh Government (2017) Our Housing AGenda: meeting the aspirations of older people in Wales. A report by the Expert Group on Housing an Ageing Population in Wales. January 2017.

<sup>23</sup> Welsh Government (2012) Consultation document. The Strategy for Older People in Wales. Number: WG16742. 25 October 2012.

<sup>24</sup> Welsh Government (2017) Our Housing AGenda: meeting the aspirations of older people in Wales. A report by the Expert Group on Housing an Ageing Population in Wales. January 2017.

<sup>25</sup> Boswell, C. (2013) The Housing Choices of Older People: enabling informed decision making. Unpublished paper for Age Cymru. Cardiff Metropolitan University. June 2013.

provide community living and associated benefits to quality of life. The presence of a warden is often a key factor in reducing demand on the emergency services and hospitals. All forms of retirement housing need to be built within age friendly communities, to ensure that residents have full access to local services and facilities that support independence and wellbeing.

Under-occupation, with reference to the social rented sector, arises where a household lives in a property that is deemed too large for its needs. Further to the Welfare Reform Act 2012, working age social tenants in receipt of Housing Benefit will experience a reduction in their benefit entitlement if they live in housing that is deemed too large for their needs (also referred to as the 'spare room subsidy' and the 'bedroom tax').<sup>26</sup> Under-occupation can arise when older tenants/couples remain in their home after their children have moved out. We believe that sensitivity needs to be applied by social housing landlords regarding this issue in terms of forward planning to find the optimum occupation for social housing.

The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 contains provisions designed to assist in the establishment of Co-operative Housing Associations. There is scope for piloting housing models which are currently less tested in Wales, for example co-housing, Intentional Communities, home sharing models, retirement villages, park homes and intergenerational living.<sup>27,28</sup>

Research by Age UK suggests that only 3% of people would consider moving into a retirement flat in later life, and only 2% would be tempted by a retirement housing scheme – demonstrating the need for all homes to be accessible and adaptable rather than just those built as specialist retirement housing.<sup>29</sup>

People's choices of housing in later life are severely constrained by a lack of information.<sup>30</sup> Older people need to be better informed, and have access to information about: housing options (in both the private and social sector provision), aids and adaptations, and appropriate independent financial information (such as eligibility for grants, affordable loans, equity release, paying for residential care) - to help them make an informed decision about where they want to live in later life.

Such advice should be promoted before retirement to allow forward planning, greater choice, and to facilitate independent living. The Expert Group on Housing highlights that

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<sup>26</sup> House of Commons Library (2016) Under-occupying social housing: Housing Benefit entitlement. Briefing Paper Number 06272, 3 February 2016. Author: Wendy Wilson.

<sup>27</sup> Welsh Government (2017) Our Housing AGEnda: meeting the aspirations of older people in Wales. A report by the Expert Group on Housing an Ageing Population in Wales. January 2017.

<sup>28</sup> Age Cymru (2016) EnvisAGE Towards an age friendly Wales. Article by C. Boswell and J. Beauchamp: Housing options for older people in Wales.

<sup>29</sup> Age UK (2014) TNS omnibus survey for Age UK (August 2014) 1,990 adults aged 18+ in Great Britain. Cited in: Age UK (03 September 2014) Lack of suitable housing costing NHS millions.

<http://www.ageuk.org.uk/latest-press/lack-of-suitable-housing-costing-the-nhs-millions-every-year/>

<sup>30</sup> Boswell, C. (2013) The Housing Choices of Older People: enabling informed decision making. Unpublished paper for Age Cymru. Cardiff Metropolitan University. June 2013.

'access to information and advice is crucial. People need information to help them make the right housing choices at the right time and in the right way'.<sup>31</sup>

Homeowners in particular also need to have information about reliable services to help with the maintenance of their home and garden, and in this context, awareness should be raised about potential scams and rogue traders.

Some older people may need housing information and advice and also support to help them move house or to downsize / right-size, should they choose to do so. It is perceived that there are two main barriers to downsizing by older people: the lack of housing options and the difficulty of moving.<sup>32</sup>

### **Public policy proposals:**

- The Welsh Government must further invest in specialist retirement housing to help reduce the demand on residential care whilst promoting independence for older people
- Local authorities need to ensure that all forms of retirement housing are built within age friendly communities, to ensure that residents have full access to public or community transport and local services and facilities that support independence and wellbeing
- UK, Welsh and local governments need to provide information on housing options, aids and adaptations, and related financial information, which should be promoted before retirement to allow forward planning, greater choice and to facilitate independent living.

### **Home adaptations**

Older people must to be able to live safe, independent and active lives in the setting most appropriate to them, and their home may need to be adapted to meet their changing needs. In an Age Cymru poll, 28% of people surveyed said that their home will need adapting to make it suitable for them as they get older.<sup>33</sup>

Adapting homes to make them suit the needs and capabilities of the older occupant reduces disability and risk of accidents,<sup>34</sup> increases independence and improves health and wellbeing. The provision of adaptations such as the installation of stairlifts, handrails, shower seats and ramps can provide a substantial improvement to the quality of life of recipients, by enabling the person to retain autonomy and dignity.

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<sup>31</sup> Welsh Government (2017) Our Housing AGenda: meeting the aspirations of older people in Wales. A report by the Expert Group on Housing an Ageing Population in Wales. January 2017.

<sup>32</sup> The Guardian (2014) Last-time buyers: help older people to solve the housing crisis. Stephen Burke. 17 December 2014. <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/dec/17/last-time-buyers-solution-housing-crisis>

<sup>33</sup> ICM (2012) Poll for Age Cymru, March 2012.

<sup>34</sup> Welsh Government (2013) The Strategy for Older People in Wales 2013 – 2013.

Simple adaptations to existing homes do not have to be hugely expensive. In terms of cost effectiveness, adaptations can prevent accident and injury and can present an alternative to residential care. However, many people have to wait long periods to receive adaptations that will make their homes safe and support them to remain independent. The timely adaptation of homes reduces disability and risk of accident.<sup>35</sup>

Poor quality and inaccessible housing are often the root cause of falls and trips in the home; can contribute towards feelings of loneliness and isolation and can cause delayed transfers of care.<sup>36</sup> Research by Age UK<sup>37</sup> has shown that unsuitable housing may leave older patients facing unnecessary delays in being discharged from hospital, as they await home adaptations before discharge. We believe that improved efficiency is needed in the delivery of publicly funded home adaptations services for older people.

The Expert Group on Housing highlights that it is particularly important for the assessment of housing needs to be an integral part of population assessments and the development of wellbeing plans, and that local authorities need to think about the housing options available to older people as part of assessing their wider care needs.<sup>38</sup>

Accessible housing is vital to people being able to live independently for longer. We want to see all new homes in Wales built to Lifetime Home Standards,<sup>39</sup> making them suitable for people of all ages, and which will be easier and less costly to adapt if people's needs change, should they develop a mobility problem or disability in later life.

The Expert Group on Housing highlights that the role of government and the wider public sector should not be restricted to supporting improvements to the physical infrastructure of the homes of older people, and that harnessing the use of modern digital technologies also needs to be seen as a priority going forward. Technology can play a key role in assisting people to live independently whilst at the same time keeping people connected and less likely to experience loneliness and isolation.<sup>40</sup> In this context, we believe it is important that new build homes, residential homes, extra care housing and housing association properties, for example, are developed with internet access. In some cases, Wi-Fi is only available in communal areas.

### **Public policy proposals:**

- Local authorities must ensure that basic repairs and home adaptations are provided in all areas of Wales within a reasonable time period

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<sup>35</sup> Welsh Government (2014) Strategy for Older People in Wales (2013-2023): Living Longer, Ageing Well. Strategy Delivery Plan.

<sup>36</sup> Welsh Government (2017) Our Housing AGEnda: meeting the aspirations of older people in Wales. A report by the Expert Group on Housing an Ageing Population in Wales. January 2017.

<sup>37</sup> Age UK (2014) Housing in Later Life.

<sup>38</sup> Welsh Government (2017) Our Housing AGEnda: meeting the aspirations of older people in Wales. A report by the Expert Group on Housing an Ageing Population in Wales. January 2017.

<sup>39</sup> Lifetime Homes <http://www.lifetimehomes.org.uk/>

<sup>40</sup> Welsh Government (2017) Our Housing AGEnda: meeting the aspirations of older people in Wales. A report by the Expert Group on Housing an Ageing Population in Wales. January 2017.

- The Welsh Government should ensure that all new homes in Wales are built to Lifetime Home Standards, making them suitable for people of all ages, and which will be easier and less costly to adapt if people's needs change.

### **Fuel poverty and energy efficiency**

Older people are most likely to suffer fuel poverty; a contributing factor is that they tend to live in older, energy inefficient properties. We welcome the Welsh Government's £104 million investment over the next four years to increase the number of energy efficient homes.<sup>41</sup> However, the Welsh Government's pledge to eradicate fuel poverty by 2018 will be unachievable without a new fuel poverty strategy that is underpinned by further investment to ensure all older people live in warm, affordable homes.

Broader fuel poverty issues are covered in Age Cymru's public policy statement on 'Fuel poverty'.<sup>42</sup>

#### **Public policy proposal:**

- The Welsh Government must produce a new fuel poverty strategy and provide additional investment in energy efficiency to ensure all older people live in warm, affordable homes.

### **Diversity issues in housing policy**

All public authorities in Wales must treat older people as individuals and recognise the inherent diversity of later life. The needs of older people with multiple protected characteristics must be accommodated in housing policy and service delivery.

Local authorities should engage with older LGBT people when exploring issues related to support and housing models. Older LGBT people should be able to access the variety of housing options and different support models open to older people, knowing that they will be accepted and can live in an inclusive, safe and secure environment. Diversity training is key in relation to housing staff and other housing support service providers. Staff need to be empowered to challenge homophobic attitudes in order to combat harassment and social exclusion by other tenants within schemes.

Age Cymru's Older Minority Ethnic Network (OMEN) has highlighted the need to ensure that local authority housing strategies more effectively address and take the need of

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<sup>41</sup> Welsh Government (2017) £104 million to heat Wales' most vulnerable households. 14 February 2017. <http://gov.wales/newsroom/environmentandcountryside/2017/170214-104million-to-heat-wales-most-vulnerable-households/?lang=en>

<sup>42</sup> Age Cymru (2015) Public Policy Statement, Fuel poverty. September 2015 <http://www.ageuk.org.uk/PageFiles/52134/Fuel%20Poverty%20policy%20statement%20-%20Sept%202015.pdf?epslanguage=en-GB-CY?dtrk=true>

older BME (black and minority ethnic) tenants into account, in areas with both high and lower concentrations of older BME people. All local authorities need to ensure that older BME people have access to information and advice on housing options and housing support, and that language needs are effectively addressed.

The previous Welsh Government's Gypsy and Traveller Framework for Action and Delivery<sup>43</sup> highlighted that the majority of Gypsies and Travellers in Wales have at some point lived in houses. This is in keeping with other parts of the UK where this is most likely as a result of insufficient sites. However, there are other reasons why Gypsies and Travellers may choose to live in houses. Many move into houses for health or education reasons or because they can no longer live with the constant evictions from unauthorised encampments. The movement between sites and bricks and mortar accommodation is likely to continue with reference to different needs at different times of life.<sup>44</sup> The Framework also recognises that many Gypsies and Travellers have a cultural aversion to living in bricks and mortar accommodation.

The duty on local authorities to provide sites for Gypsies and Travellers where a need has been identified will provide flexibility for local authorities to develop sites themselves or work with Gypsy and Traveller households to develop their own private sites.<sup>45</sup> We note that this duty 'will be of particular benefit to children and young people, disabled people and older people who may have greater need to access community services'.<sup>46</sup> In exercising their duty to provide sites for Gypsies and Travellers where a need has been identified, local authorities should ensure good access to community services and healthcare.

### **Public policy proposals:**

- Local authorities must take the needs of older people with multiple protected characteristics into account in housing policy and service delivery
- Local authorities and other providers of housing services must understand and address the additional barriers that older lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people may encounter when accessing housing services, and support their needs
- Local authorities should ensure that language needs are effectively addressed in the provision of information and advice for older black and minority ethnic people on housing and housing support options
- In exercising their duty to provide sites for Gypsies and Travellers where a need has been identified, local authorities should ensure good access to community services and healthcare.

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<sup>43</sup> Welsh Government Travelling to a Better Future. Gypsy and Traveller Framework for Action and Delivery. <http://gov.wales/docs/dsjlg/publications/equality/110928gypsytravelleren.pdf>

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Welsh Government (2016) Homes for Wales Bulletin. February 2016.

<sup>46</sup> Welsh Government (2013) Housing (Wales) Bill. Explanatory Memorandum. November 2013.

[http://www.assembly.wales/Laid%20Documents/PRI-LD9558-EM%20-%20Housing%20\(Wales\)%20Bill%20-%20EXPLANATORY%20MEMORANDUM-18112013-251741/pri-ld9558-em-e-English.pdf](http://www.assembly.wales/Laid%20Documents/PRI-LD9558-EM%20-%20Housing%20(Wales)%20Bill%20-%20EXPLANATORY%20MEMORANDUM-18112013-251741/pri-ld9558-em-e-English.pdf)