

Improving Housing Adequacy in Wales

We want to know what you think about our ideas



This document was written by the **Welsh Government**. It is an easy read version of 'Consultation on the White Paper on securing a path towards Adequate Housing, including Fair Rents and Affordability'.

October 2024

How to use this document



This is an easy read document. You may still need support to read it. Ask someone you know to help you.



Words in **bold blue writing** may be hard to understand. You can check what the words in blue mean on **page 29**.

Where the document says we, this means the Welsh

Government. For more information contact:



Welsh Government

Llywodraeth Cymru Email: privatesectorhousing@gov.wales



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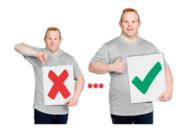
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What this booklet is about



Everyone should be able to get safe, affordable homes that meet their needs.



We want to make improvements to housing in Wales.



This includes making renting a private home:

- more affordable
- fairer



habitable

Habitable means it can be lived in well. It is safe, warm and other things.



We want to know what you think about our ideas.



There are questions to answer at the end of this booklet.

You can send your answers to:



Email: <u>privatesectorhousing@gov.wales</u>



Post:

White Paper Housing Adequacy, Fair Rents and Affordability,

Private Sector Housing Policy Branch,

Welsh Government,

Cathays Park,

Cardiff,

CF10 3NQ



Please tell us if you are replying for yourself or your place of work.



For an easy read guide to how we use your information please contact our Data Protection Officer:



Data Protection Officer
Welsh Government
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ



Email: <u>dataprotectionofficer@gov.wales</u>

What we want to do



One of our big goals has been to make this **White Paper** about housing and rent.



A White Paper is a government policy document. They set out our ideas for laws.



We have issues with housing and renting.



We have collected information and asked housing and other organisations what they think.

Some of the things they told us were:



• We need better information about the housing sector.



• Affordable homes are really important.



• There is not enough housing.



We have used all this information to make this **White Paper**. We now want to know what you think.



We think that long-term changes will need to be made over time.



A good home is important for everyone in Wales and their wellbeing.

Housing adequacy



We want to make sure everyone in Wales can access **housing adequacy**.

This term means things like:



• Housing that meets the needs of the people who live in it.



• Housing that is safe and secure.



• That those who live there can afford to live there.



We want to work together with housing organisations in Wales to put things in place to make all of this happen.



The **United Nations** came up with 7 goals needed for **housing adequacy**. We agree with these too and think we should use them. The 7 goals are:



• Legal security of tenancy: This means laws that protect tenants from being evicted. And protection from other threats.



• Available services: for example, safe drinking water, and energy for cooking, heating, lighting.



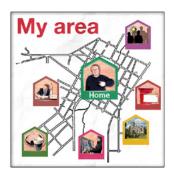
• Affordability: people must be able to afford to live in their home and still pay for other basic things. For example, food.



• **Safe and warm:** homes should be protected against cold, damp, heat, rain, wind and other threats to health.



• Accessibility: the needs of people must be thought about. For example, disabled people.



• Location: People should be able to get to work and to doctors, schools and other important places and services.



• **Cultural adequacy:** this means thinking about the way it is built.



It is important to think about how these 7 goals, and other ideas, could be used in Wales to make housing better.



We need to look in more detail to make sure it's clear what we mean by **adequate housing**. For example, by breaking down each goal into many smaller actions. This will help us check to see if people have a suitable home.



We would need clear rules. This would help everybody to know how we check to see if people have a good home.

The local area



It is important to think about what is happening in the local area. We have been looking into this through a project in **Dwyfor**.



For example, some parts of Wales are popular for buying a holiday home. This can increase house prices.



The project has looked at local councils charging things like higher council tax on **holiday homes**. The money from this higher tax could be used to support housing in that area.



We are still looking at the information learnt from this project and deciding what to do next.



We also need to think about whether people can afford housing in their local area.



We would like to know what people think about how much housing costs in their own community.



For example, one part of a council might be expensive because it is by the coast.



Do we need to think about issues that affect certain communities? For example, the Welsh language being spoken in a community? And other issues that may affect only certain communities.



We also need to think about whether the goals for housing would apply to people who own their own homes. If so, how they could be applied.



We need to decide how the law could be used to make sure people have **housing adequacy**. This means their homes:

- are safe and secure
- meet their needs
- and they can afford to live there.



There are laws in place already to support with this. For example, the **Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016**.

Housing Strategy



We think there should be a law in Wales to develop a big plan about housing. The aim of the plan is to make sure everybody has a good home. The plan would be called a **Housing Strategy**.



The housing plan is to make sure people have **housing adequacy.** This means good, safe, and affordable homes for people to live in. The goal is to provide housing that meets everyone's basic needs.



We think this will take time to develop. It will happen after the next Senedd election in 2026.



The law could include things like:

- A duty for Welsh Ministers to make the Strategy within a certain time.
- What housing would need to achieve and how.
- How the strategy would be reviewed and checked.
- Who should have to follow the strategy.

Private renting



We think we need to learn more about the prices of rented properties across local areas.



We would like landlords to provide information about the amount of rent they charge. We want to look into how we could do this. We would like to see if the rented property prices of an area could be made public. So people can compare rent prices in their area.



In the future this could give tenants the information they need to challenge the rent they are paying.



Or see why they are paying more. For example, if improvements have been made to the home.



The organisation **Rent Smart Wales** may be able to hold this information. They already collect some information about houses.



There are rules in place for landlords who rent homes through the law called the **Housing (Wales) Act 2014**.



Rent Smart Wales was set up to help with this.



We think it would make sense for them to collect the information about rent prices and other information. But we want to know what you think about this.



The information also needs to be kept up to date. And laws about keeping personal information safe and private need to be followed.



It is really important that a privately rented home is **habitable**.



Landlords have to do a number of things to make sure their property is **habitable**. But we don't always know if they have done these.



More needs to be done to make sure homes do follow rules and are safe to live in.



We think landlords should need to complete a report every year for Rent Smart Wales. It would cover things like:

- Information about gas and electricity safety.
- Property checks.
- Things like smoke detectors and other things have been checked.
- Other information about health and safety.



Landlords already have to complete some information. So we don't think it would take up too much time to add this.

Rent guarantor



A **rent guarantor** is a person who agrees to pay the rent if the main tenant cannot.



Sometimes landlords ask for a **rent guarantor** if the tenant has had some issues in the past. But there can be other reasons.



We think the council should offer to be a **rent guarantor** for some people. This happens in some areas already. A guide for all councils should be made about this.



This would give people the chance to show they can make the payments. Then they won't need a **rent guarantor** in the future.

Renting with pets



Many people in Wales have a pet. But often private landlords won't accept pets.



There are some rules about this under the law called **Renting Homes (Wales) Act**. Anyone who wants to live with a pet can ask the landlord if they can have a pet in their home.



We think it would be fair for landlords to ask for a small charge to be made to pet owners. This would be for insurance against any damage to the property.

Tax



Landlords must pay tax on the properties they own. We think some changes could be made here. This is because there are not enough affordable homes in Wales and we want there to be more.



We want to increase the amount of affordable homes. We want to reduce the amount of tax landlords pay on a property they buy, if the property will be leased to the local council. This means the council can then rent it out for a lower rent.

Questions



1. What do you think about our ideas in the section called **Housing Adequacy**?

Please read pages 10 to 13.



2. What do you think about our ideas in the section called **Private Renting**?

Please read pages 18 to 24.



3. Is there anything we have missed?



4. Is there anything else you would like to say?

Hard words

Habitable

This means it can be lived in well. It is safe, warm and other things.

Rent guarantor

A rent guarantor is a person who agrees to pay the rent if the main tenant can't.

White Paper

A White Paper is a government policy document. They set out our ideas for laws.