



A step in the right direction for homeless young people and vulnerable women in Wales

## **Llamau's response to the Committees' of the National Assembly's Call for Information to inform their scrutiny of the Welsh Government's 2019-20 Draft Budget Proposals**

Llamau's mission is to end youth homelessness and homelessness for vulnerable women in Wales. We believe that no young person or vulnerable woman should ever have to experience homelessness, and we provide a range of preventative services, accommodation and services which support some of the most vulnerable people in Wales to move on from homelessness.

We provide a range of accommodation services, including supported accommodation projects for young people and vulnerable women, and Domestic Abuse Refuges, which are currently funded through the Supporting People Program Grant. In addition we provide a range of successful preventative services for both young people and women, including our Family Mediation projects, which are funded through Welsh Government's Homelessness Prevention Grant. Last year 71% of young people who took part in Family Mediation remained at or returned home, meaning that homelessness was prevented for 547 young people.

### **Concerns about funding for housing and homelessness services**

In the draft budget for 2019-20, the Welsh Government has proposed amalgamating nine grants, including Supporting People and Homelessness Prevention into one 'Super Grant'. This means that there will be no guaranteed funding for housing and homelessness services, and we have major concerns about the potential impact of this proposal on the levels of homelessness in Wales.

We have already seen the impact of the removal of the ring-fence from Supporting People funding in England, with many homelessness services, including Domestic Abuse refuges no longer able to run, as a direct result of the funding decision. (See evidence below). We remain extremely concerned that the Welsh Government's proposal would have a similar impact in Wales. We have historically seen the Welsh Government doing all it can to protect people in Wales from the effects of the UK Government's austerity, and we urge the Welsh Government to consider the housing sector's alternative proposal for funding housing and homelessness services in 2019-20 and beyond.

We understand the pressures faced by the Welsh Government to cut spending as a result of the UK Government's policy of austerity. However, we are concerned that the removal of the ring-fence from housing and homelessness services and with local



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authorities having more autonomy over funding levels for these services, will inevitably result in cuts to housing and homelessness services. Alongside Cymorth Cymru and other colleagues in the housing and homelessness sector, we are therefore proposing that Welsh Government create two amalgamated grant funding streams, rather than one 'Super Grant'. This would involve the creation of one grant funding stream specifically for housing and homelessness services, which would include merging Supporting People and Homelessness Prevention funding.

We strongly believe that this solution is necessary in order to ensure that housing and homelessness services can continue at a time when homelessness continues to increase.

Furthermore, research has shown that money spent on housing and homelessness services, such as Supporting People and Homelessness Prevention, results in significant savings to the public purse. Indeed, research has shown that for every £1 invested in Supporting People, savings of £2.30 are delivered to housing, health, social care and community safety.

### Evidence from England

The removal of the ring-fence from Supporting People funding in England has had a devastating impact on many homelessness and housing-related support services. A report from the National Audit Office in 2014 highlighted average spending reduction on housing-related support services in England of 45% between 2010/11 and 2014/15. A number of sources have also reported cuts of up to 80% in some local authority areas. Homeless Link identified specific cuts for rough sleepers, people with mental health problems, prison leavers and disabled people.

Between 2010-14 England lost 17% of specialist refuges and a third of all referrals to refuges were turned away, normally due to a lack of available space. Reports in November 2017 suggest council spending on domestic violence refuges across 33 local authorities in one region of England has fallen by up to 75% since 2010.

Although the circumstances were different in England, these statistics highlight the very real risk of removing the ring-fence from housing and homelessness funding.