

**Julie James AS/MS**  
**Y Gweinidog Newid Hinsawdd**  
**Minister for Climate Change**



**Llywodraeth Cymru**  
**Welsh Government**

13 January 2022

Dear John,

Thank you for your letter of 14<sup>th</sup> December regarding the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales report: Homelessness Reviewed: an open door to positive change.

Whilst the Welsh Government will not be responding formally to the report as its recommendations are focused on local authorities, I have written to the Public Services Ombudsman to thank him for the report and to say that we will, of course, continue to build its findings into our thinking as we deliver on the [Ending Homelessness Action Plan](#), launched in November last year:

All of the areas the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales has invited Welsh Government to consider will form part of our work to deliver on the plan over the course of this government term.

The Committee will be aware, and as the Ombudsman's report acknowledges, the investigation was undertaken at a time of considerable change in homelessness services. The inclusive 'no-one left out' approach we have taken since the start of the pandemic, and which continues today, has changed the landscape of how homelessness services operate, and has accelerated the transformation required to achieve our long term goal of ending homelessness in Wales. Our commitment to this work is clear in the Programme for Government, which contains a commitment to reform housing law and implement the Homelessness Action Group's recommendation to fundamentally reform homelessness services to focus on prevention and rapid rehousing. Taking action to end homelessness also forms part of the Cooperation Agreement with Plaid Cymru, as the Committee will know. As I set out in my response to the Ombudsman, and as you note in your letter, the report is therefore very useful in providing valuable evidence and insight to inform the work we are currently taking forward to transform homelessness services in Wales, including legislative reform.

### **Partnership working**

The Ending Homelessness Action Plan sets out the high level actions we will be taking over the next five years to achieve fundamental reform. A key part of these actions are to be

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

undertaken by, and in partnership with local authorities. Together we will be working to re-shape services around a rapid rehousing approach, shifting the focus of our policy, practice and resources away from the provision of temporary accommodation towards long-term, settled homes. An important part of supporting this work is the Rapid Rehousing Transition Guidance for Local Authorities, which we issued at the end of 2021. This will help local authorities to develop a robust plan to support every person who presents as homeless, and to drive forward our aim to make homelessness rare, brief and un-repeated.

Furthermore, at the start of the pandemic, we established a team of Relationship Managers to work closely with every local authority in Wales with the aim of strengthening partnership working and supporting and improving delivery of homelessness prevention policy and legislation. This has been key in maintaining an open and honest dialogue with local authorities around the issues they have faced throughout the pandemic. As part of the transformation agenda, we are continuing to work with local authorities and the WLGA to examine how we can further strengthen the support we offer to both local authorities and our wider delivery partners.

### **Legislative reform**

I have been very clear that there will be no going back to the pre-pandemic model of delivery and recognise there will need to be a transitional period before we can undertake wider scale legislative reform. As such, my officials are considering the short term legislative and policy mechanisms needed to continue with our inclusive 'no-one left out' approach post-pandemic, including any additional guidance or clarifications to supplement the existing Code of Guidance. As set out in the Action Plan, we also plan to publish a Green Paper later this year setting out the longer term policy and legislative mechanisms needed to support this change. The findings in the Ombudsman's report will be particularly useful in helping to shape and inform aspects of these proposals.

### **Funding**

The pandemic has given us an opportunity to transform homelessness services and begin the adoption of a truly inclusive approach to ensure no-one is left without a home. To support this, we were able to maintain the 2021-22 funding for the Housing Support Grant (HSG) in the latest Draft Budget 2022-23, published on 20 December. In 2021-22 the HSG received a significant increase of £40m, over 30%, taking total funding to £166.763m, recognising the importance of housing support as part of the preventative agenda.

I was also pleased to have been able to provide local authorities with indicative funding for 2023-24 and 2024-25, to provide them with certainty over funding for future years to support their planning. This sustained increase will help deliver the transformational change required to achieve our long term goal of ending homelessness in Wales.

The draft budget also includes an additional £15m in 2022-23 in the Homelessness BEL, and a further £5m to this BEL in each of the following 2 years (so £25m uplift over the 3 year period). This funding supports the Government's commitment to supporting those who need to access temporary accommodation during these difficult times and our longer term ambitions to fundamentally reform homelessness and move to a rapid rehousing approach.

I would like to thank the Committee for its continued interest in this area and look forward to working together on it in the future.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Julie James". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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