

# AWICS Wales News

## April 2017



**Cardiff County Hall, the headquarters of Cardiff City Council.**

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### **The Abolition of the Right to Buy and Associated Rights (Wales) Bill**

In March 2017, the Welsh Government presented the 'Abolition of the Right to Buy and Associated Rights (Wales) Bill' at the National Assembly. This Bill provides for the abolition of the 'Right to Buy', 'Preserved Right to Buy' and 'Right to Acquire' throughout Wales.

The number of homes lost through the Right to Buy in Wales is equivalent to 45% of the social housing stock in 1981. This has resulted in longer waiting times for people in housing need, many of whom are vulnerable, to access a home they can afford.

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In introducing the Bill, the Welsh Government aims to protect the Welsh stock of social housing from further reduction, ensuring it is available to provide safe, secure and affordable housing for people who are unable to take advantage of the housing market to buy or rent a home. The Bill complements other actions being taken by the Welsh Government to increase the supply of housing.

Carl Sargeant, the Secretary for Communities & Children at the Welsh Government said that:

*"Our social housing is a valuable resource, but it is under considerable pressure. The size of the stock has declined significantly since 1980 when the Right to Buy was introduced. The number of sales is equivalent to 45% of the social housing stock in 1981. This has resulted in people in housing need, many of whom are vulnerable, waiting longer to access a home they can afford.*

*"The Bill supports the Welsh Government's wider aims of a more prosperous and fairer Wales, helping to tackle poverty by protecting our stock of social housing from further reduction.*

*"I recognise the proposal affects existing tenants and we will ensure tenants are made aware of the effect of the Bill in good time before abolition takes place. The Bill will require the Welsh Government to publish information, which social landlords in turn must provide to every affected tenant, within two months of the Bill receiving Royal Assent.*

*"We have set an ambitious target of creating 20,000 affordable homes in this term of government. Alongside social housing this will include schemes such as Help to Buy and Rent to Own to enable people on modest incomes to own their own homes. We are supporting low cost home ownership and we are expanding the social housing stock. Abolishing the Right to Buy will complement these other actions we are taking in order to support people in housing need."*

Councillor Dyfed Edwards, the Welsh Local Government Association spokesperson for Housing, said that:

*"At a time of acute shortages of social rented homes, and with many thousands of people currently on housing waiting lists, the proposal from the Welsh Government to abolish right to buy is a welcome step in tackling a growing problem in Wales. It is essential that people's access is improved to good quality social rented housing in order to enhance people's lives, and also to revitalise local communities"*

Matthew Dicks, Director of the Chartered Institute of Housing, said that:

*"We have a huge shortage of affordable housing in Wales and CIH Cymru supports any measure that will stop the further loss of social housing stock which is what this bill intends to do."*

But he said the main issue was that social housing stock, lost through Right to Buy, had not been sufficiently replaced.

David Melding AM, Conservative Housing spokesman at the Welsh Assembly said that:

*"There is a severe shortage of affordable housing in Wales because Labour hasn't built enough affordable homes, and not because council tenants have had a chance to buy theirs."*

To ensure tenants are aware the Right to Buy is ending, the Bill requires the Welsh Government to publish information, which social landlords must provide to affected tenants, within two months of Royal Assent. To encourage the development of new housing stock, the Right to Buy and Right to Acquire will end for new homes two months after Royal Assent. For existing housing stock, final abolition will take place at least one year after Royal Assent. This is to ensure that the measure complies with human rights legislation.

Several local authorities have already suspended the scheme in their areas.

Councils will still be able to sell housing stock once the abolition comes into force, but only on a voluntary basis and at the market rate without the discounts that were seen under the compulsory Right to Buy scheme.

This approach contrasts markedly with that in England where the 'Right to Buy' has been 're-invigorated' and is being extended to housing associations.

The Abolition of the Right to Buy and Associated Rights (Wales) Bill will be considered at our seminar: 'All You Want to Know about Welsh Social Housing Finance' that will be held in Cardiff in June (see below).

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### **The Implications of Brexit for Wales and Public Services**

In January 2017, the Welsh Government published a White Paper 'Securing Wales' Future' that sets out their position on the Brexit negotiations. It identifies six key areas:

- The importance of continued participation in the single market to support businesses and secure jobs and the future prosperity of Wales.
- A balanced approach to immigration linking migration to jobs and good properly enforced employment practice which protects all workers whatever their country of origin.
- The need for the United Kingdom government to make good on promises made during the referendum campaign that Wales would not lose funding as a result of the United Kingdom leaving the European Union.
- A fundamentally different constitutional relationship between the devolved governments and the United Kingdom government based on mutual respect, reaching agreement through consent.
- Maintaining the social and environmental protections. In particular: workers' rights once these are no longer guaranteed through the United Kingdom's membership of the European Union.
- Proper consideration of transitional arrangements if longer-term arrangements have not been agreed at the point of exit from the European Union.

These issues are important for Wales. Cardiff University has calculated that Wales is a net beneficiary of the United Kingdom's membership of the European Union. In 2014, this totalled £245million or £79 per person. The European Union's programme for 2014 to 2020 includes more than £2billion for Welsh farmers and more than £2billion in cohesion funding for the less developed parts of Wales. During the referendum, the 'Leave' campaign stated that these budgets would be maintained or even increased if the United Kingdom left the European Union but some are sceptical!

So, where are we now with the six key areas that have been identified by the Welsh Government?

- Despite the 'Leave' campaign stating that the United Kingdom could stay in the single market, and despite this being a commitment in the Conservative manifesto in 2015, the United Kingdom government has now made it clear that Britain will leave the single market. The United Kingdom government responds to concerns about this by promising an interventionist industrial strategy to protect business through subsidies and protectionism. It remains to be seen how this will be implemented and how effective it will be.
- Concerns about immigration are widely seen as the main reason why most people voted to leave the European Union. The United Kingdom government clearly wishes to address these concerns, but whether they will do this in the way that is suggested by the Welsh Government remains to be seen.
- The United Kingdom government has made no firm commitments regarding maintaining current levels of funding in Wales. There are two reasons to be concerned that these levels may not be maintained. First, the United Kingdom government may be forced to reduce total expenditure in the face of increasing debts and falling revenues; and second, Wales is not at the centre of political gravity in the United Kingdom and will have to compete with other areas for funding.
- The United Kingdom government is taking a strong Unionist position. It not only wants to repatriate powers from Brussels but also wants to constrain the Scottish Parliament and appears to have abandoned further devolution in England. In this climate, it may be difficult for the Welsh Government to achieve the constitutional position that it desires.
- The declared purpose of Brexit is for the United Kingdom government to be able to change laws that have been agreed in the European Union to make Britain more competitive in the international market place. The conclusion must be drawn that this will involve reducing and removing social and environmental protections including workers' rights. If ministers don't mean that they intend to do this, what do they mean?
- The United Kingdom government has stated that it would prefer 'no deal' to a 'bad deal' and shows little interest in transitional arrangements.

In February 2017, Tony Blair, the former Prime Minister, caught the headlines with his speech about Britain leaving the European Union. His speech included the following interesting section about the implications for public services:

*"The economic future which could work outside of Europe is... the low tax, light regulation, offshore free market hub... which to the Brexit ideologues is a promise of things to come. This free market vision would require major re-structuring of the British economy and its tax and welfare system.*

*"It will not mean more money for the National Health Service but less; actually it probably means a wholesale rebalancing of our health care towards one based on private as much as public provision."*

Anthony C Grayling, Master of the New College of the Humanities has written in the 'New European' about the likely effects of Brexit on public services. He says that:

*"The United Kingdom economy will lose not only the money it gets back from the European Union, but it will be burdened with higher costs... which the economy will be able to manage only by making further and deeper cuts in health, education, welfare, environmental protection, defence and scientific research and development.*

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*“If, in response to this battering of the economy the United Kingdom tries to attract inward investment by becoming a low tax haven, the deleterious consequences for health, education, welfare and the rest will be even greater because lower taxes will mean less money available for those services.”*

The Welsh Government is clearly right to be concerned about these matters.

My briefing paper on: ‘Brexit and its implications for Housing’ is currently one of our most popular briefing papers. One of our readers, LB Legal Appeals – a company that provides Legal advice and representation at tribunal appeals for supported 'Exempt' and 'Specified' accommodation and other housing benefit issues, has been good enough to provide us with some feedback on the paper on Twitter, describing it as a:

*“Very useful piece on the potential implications of Brexit on Housing. It is a brilliant report.”*

Your copy can be freely downloaded from here: <http://awics.co.uk/htrack/awics.co.uk/dynam-icdata/data/docs/brexit%2520-%2520implications%2520for%2520housing%2520-%2520briefing%2520paper.pdf>

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## **Local Government Reform in Wales**

The Welsh Government considers that Local Government Reform is essential if local authorities are to be financially resilient and able to maintain and improve the quality of services during this period of austerity. They consider that this is important because Local Government plays a vitally important part in the lives of every person in Wales. Councils provide the services which educate children, look after the elderly, dispose of waste and light streets.

Challenges remain in local government and the Welsh Government considers that there is more to be done to achieve greater consistency and excellence, whilst at the same time there continues to be less money for public services.

The purpose of local government reform is to build resilience and to support renewal in local government so that local authorities are more representative, prudent, efficient, effective, resilient and integrated.

Mark Drakeford, the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government has met with all local authority Leaders and Chief Executives, also the Welsh Local Government Association and other stakeholders, to invite their views on the challenges faced and how they can be addressed. Following these discussions, the Cabinet Secretary made an oral statement in plenary in October 2016 setting out the broad proposals for the new approach based on enhanced levels of systematic and mandatory regional working.

The wider reform proposals set out in the previous Draft Local Government Bill are being progressed, subject to further discussion and development working with local authorities:

- The retention of the existing 22 local authorities, subject to any voluntary mergers, to act as the democratic tier to which councillors are elected and the ‘front-door’ for people to access services.
- Renewed scope for voluntary mergers enabled by Welsh Government support.
- Enhanced systematic and mandatory regional working. Systematic means functions would be organised on a consistent footprint and done at that level.



- The possibility that there might need to be more than one systematic footprint. In particular, one based around the City Regions covering strategic transport, land-use planning and economic development; and the other, probably the Health Board footprint, for areas like social services, education and public protection.

There are six themes to the reforms around building resilience and supporting renewal in local government so that it is:

- **Representative:** It is the role of councillors to support people's understanding and engagement in decision-making; shape the places they live in and enable people to do so also; and help people to determine local priorities. Encourage participation and greater diversity.
- **Efficient:** Remove duplication, simplify activity, and secure economies of scale. Use digital to enable efficiency and targeting of services.
- **Effective:** Be ambitious and focus on improving performance and outcomes for people. Transform and refocus services to provide better outcomes. Provide flexibility for local priorities to be determined. Take a preventative approach. Effectively balance current and future needs.
- **Prudent:** recognise the assets and skills in communities, not just focus on deficits. Take a co-production approach. Enable people to manage on their own and bring down the levels of intervention in people's lives. Welcome challenge and own the responsibility for improvement.
- **Resilient:** Finances are on a sound footing. Able to access the expertise, capability and capacity needed to deliver. Provide stability and long-term planning.
- **Integrated:** Work as part of one public service across services and boundaries. Value the contribution of all partners. Be a broker, not just a commissioner or deliverer.

The finance system for local government will need to change to support the reforms that the Welsh Government are considering to make councils more sustainable and self-sufficient. Previous Welsh Government consultations on reforming the finance system have identified broad support for a phased approach.

The Welsh Government are engaging with local authorities and other stakeholders to identify a viable way forward by early 2017. They will narrow down what the footprint for regional working would look like, the functions to be delivered through regional working and the related governance and accountability arrangements. They will also consider how the local government funding system should be aligned to support the change programme.

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### **Autumn Statement 2016 and Budget 2017**

On 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2016, Phillip Hammond, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, introduced his first autumn statement. This was the first 'budget' after the referendum on the European Union that was held on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2016.

Prior to the autumn statement, the Chancellor warned that an unprecedented level of uncertainty surrounding 'Brexit' has led to forecasts that predict slower growth for the United Kingdom and an 'eye-wateringly' large debt. Phillip Hammond told the BBC that:

*"Many of those forecasts are pointing to a slowing of economic growth next year and a sharp challenge for the public finances. We have to maintain our credibility - we have eye-wateringly large debt, we still have a significant deficit in this country and we have to prepare the economy for the period that lies ahead. I want to make sure that the economy is watertight, that we have enough headroom to deal with any unexpected challenges over the next couple of years."*

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On the fiscal outlook, Phillip Hammond said that borrowing was likely to hit £68.2 billion in 2016/17 (equivalent to 3.5% of Gross Domestic Product). After that he predicted that the deficit would reduce but would still be £17.2 billion (0.7% of Gross Domestic Product) in 2021/22. Therefore, debt will continue to climb, rising from 84% of Gross Domestic Product in 2015/16 to 87% in 2016/17 and 90% in 2017/18. The Office for Budgetary Responsibility ascribes £59 billion of extra borrowing over the next five years to changes related to the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union. It is interesting to note that a limit on debt as a proportion of Gross Domestic Product of 40% was set by Roy Jenkins when he was Chancellor in the 1960s and that this same limit was observed by Gordon Brown when he was Chancellor from 1997 to 2007.

The Autumn Statement confirmed that the government does not intend to introduce any reductions to welfare entitlements other than those that have already been announced. However, those that have already been announced are significant. The Autumn Statement included an announcement that the Universal Credit taper will be reduced from 65% to 63% from April 2017.

Until 2008, the United Kingdom government based its finances on the principle that the budget would be balanced in the long-term with deficits at times of recession balanced by surpluses during times of growth. If the United Kingdom is to avoid bankruptcy it will need to return to this policy eventually.

In August 2016, the Bank of England reduced interest rates to a record low of 0.25% and announced a programme of £70 billion of quantitative easing. Now, the Autumn Statement has increased public expenditure and reduced taxation at a time when government revenues are already falling. The government was already projecting at the time of the last budget that the 2016/17 deficit would be £75 billion and that total debt would increase to £1.6 trillion. Total debt is now projected to increase to £2 trillion.

According to the 'International Spectator', the United Kingdom's external debt as a proportion of Gross Domestic Product is now 267%. This compares with 205% in France and 194% in Greece. Looking forward, United Kingdom debt is projected to increase. Even Phillip Hammond has described this level of debt as 'eye-watering'.

Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland will receive more money which can be spent on infrastructure projects, with each devolved administration deciding where this will be spent. This will be an increase of over £800 million for the Scottish Government, over £400 million for the Welsh Government and over £250 million for the Northern Ireland Executive.

This appears to me to be the biggest reflationary package using both fiscal and monetary measures that any United Kingdom government has ever introduced and underlines the threat to the economy caused by falling investment, exports (despite the fall in the value of sterling) and consumer demand. Whether this approach will be effective remains to be seen. However, it appears to me that it will not be sustainable in the long-term and certainly does not appear to be 'prudent'.

The government's priorities in this Autumn Statement are to reduce taxation and to increase expenditure on infrastructure – especially high profile infrastructure – but with limited emphasis on local government or social housing.

I remember attending the annual conference of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy in 2010. One of the presentations was made by Goran Persson, the former Social-Democratic Prime-Minister of Sweden from 1996 to 2006, who tackled that country's budget deficit successfully in the 1990s. He described a meeting that he held shortly after becoming Prime-Minister with American bankers with whom the Swedish government was in debt. They were insisting that Sweden reduce its expenditure on specific budgets and insisting that specific changes were made to the way education, health, welfare and other services were provided. He said that he initially felt angry that the bankers dared to make these demands but then concluded that:

*"An indebted government and people have no political freedom because the markets will act independently".*

In short – debtors have no sovereignty because they surrender it to their creditors. My fear is that in trying to borrow and spend their way out of this crisis, the United Kingdom government will create an even greater financial crisis in the long-term with prosperity and sovereignty being lost.

Phillip Hammond presented his first budget on 14<sup>th</sup> March 2017. Public sector debt in the United Kingdom is now close to £1.7trillion (equivalent to £62,000 for every household in the country). The government plans to borrow £52billion during 2016/17 and to continue borrowing for the foreseeable future. Borrowing now represents 87% of Gross Domestic Product and this figure is expected to increase to 89% next year. This compares with the ceiling on borrowing of 40% of Gross Domestic Product that was part of Gordon Brown's 'sustainable investment rule'. Consumer borrowing is also at record levels. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that economic growth is only being sustained because of this borrowing and that therefore it is not sustainable.

I have written a briefing paper on the Autumn Statement and its implications for housing and local government that can be downloaded from: <http://awics.co.uk/htrack/awics.co.uk/dynamicdata/data/docs/autumn%2520statement%25202016%2520-%2520briefing%2520paper.pdf>

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## **The Welsh Budget 2017/18**

The Welsh Government published its budget for 2017/18 in October 2016. It included the following additional expenditure:

- £44million for measures to support the National Health Service, including:
  - £20million of the additional £240million funding to the National Health Service for mental health services;
  - £15million for diagnostic equipment;
  - £7million for healthcare professional education, including medical schools;
  - £1million of funding to bolster end-of-life care;
  - £1million towards the establishment of eating disorder and gender identity provision in Wales.
- £30million to support further and higher education.
- Measures to support local government, including £25million of additional funding to local authorities, £3million for a pilot to end town centre car parking charges, and £1.5million for school transport and safer routes to schools.
- £3million for arts funding – including feasibility studies for a national art gallery and football museum in North Wales and allocations for Arts Council of Wales; National Museum of Wales; National Library of Wales and Welsh Books Council.

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- £0.5million of funding to support feasibility studies into reopening Carmarthen to Aberystwyth railway line and establishing a national cycleway.
- £2million to encourage investment in ports infrastructure through a Ports Infrastructure Fund.
- £5million for Visit Wales.
- £5million to support Welsh for Adults

The budget makes provision for City Deals. The Cardiff Capital Region City Deal is a £1.2billion investment fund for the region, delivered over a twenty-year period with the aim of driving economic growth. This has been made possible by the ambition of the ten participating local authorities that have created a step change in regional collaboration, along with joint funding agreed by the Welsh and United Kingdom governments. A key part of the deal is the South Wales Metro. The Welsh Government is also working towards a deal for the Swansea Bay City Region, extending from Pembrokeshire to Neath Port Talbot, and a growth deal for North Wales to help strengthen its economy.

The Welsh Government has committed to working in partnership to deliver an extra 20,000 affordable homes through the lifetime of this Parliament. It is intended that investing public money in building and refurbishing homes will contribute to national and local economies, creating and supporting jobs and training opportunities. House building creates thousands of apprenticeships every year, provides wider regeneration in deprived areas and delivers benefits for and can transform whole communities. The Welsh Government has allocated more than £1.3billion over the term of this government in support of their housing priorities, of which £389million will be earmarked in reserves to support this commitment as plans are further developed.

Other headlines relevant to housing include:

- The Welsh Government has committed to investing £1.3billion in affordable homes over the course of this Assembly.
- Funding for the Supporting People Programme has been protected.
- The Welsh Government have announced their pre-election pledge to deliver 100,000 apprenticeships will be met with £111million of funding.
- A further £60million has been made available for the Intermediate Care Fund.

There is a small increase in the budget for increasing the supply and choice of affordable housing (including Social Housing Grant). The budget also indicates further expenditure in this area that will support a second round of Welsh Housing Finance Grant. Alongside this, there has been a large increase in the budget line for increasing the supply and choice of market housing that is intended to fund 6,000 Help to Buy homes, and the Rent to Buy model.

Aaron Hill, Public Services Manager at Community Housing Cymru commented that:

*“The overall picture for housing in the... budget of this Welsh Government term is positive. Following two successful campaigns – Homes for Wales and Let’s Keep on Supporting People – we have seen a significant commitment of capital funding for affordable homes, and further protection of the Supporting People programme. However, there are concerns over the future of regeneration funding, and clarity is needed on how temporary accommodation will be funded in future.”*

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act came into force in April 2016. It is the new legal framework that modernises social services and introduces a radical new system for social services, based on the needs of individuals. It is based on the four principles of wellbeing, people, partnership and prevention and will give people more say over their care and support. The local government settlement for 2017/18 includes an additional £25million that will be specifically for social services. This builds on the additional £21million allocated to social services through the local government settlement in 2016/17.

Local authorities are key partners for the Welsh Government. Local government plays a vital part in the lives of every person in Wales – councils provide the services that educate children, look after elderly and vulnerable people, dispose of waste and light streets. In the budget for 2017/18, the Welsh Government states that it has protected local government from the worst of the impact of austerity. This has been supported by £25million of additional funding for local authorities in 2017/18. As a result of these actions, taking into account the funding provided through Revenue Support Grant and redistributed Non-Domestic Rate Income, this is the first year since 2013/14 that there has been an increase in the un-hypothecated funding for local government.

In 2017/18, the Welsh Government will be providing £1.5million of additional funding to support school transport and safer routes to schools and £3million for a pilot to end town centre car parking charges.

The Welsh Government is taking further steps to reduce the administrative burden, where appropriate, by amalgamating grants and by moving funding out of specific grants and into un-hypothecated funding through the revenue support grant.

The Welsh Government considers that their budget provides local government with the necessary support to continue to take forward the transformation and reform agenda necessary to ensure they can maintain and improve the vital services they provide to their communities going forward.

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## **Funding Supported Housing**

In September 2016, the United Kingdom Government made a statement on the future of Supported Housing in which they said that they would publish a consultation paper. This was finally published in November as a joint consultation by the Departments for Communities & Local Government and Work & Pensions.

The United Kingdom government has already announced that it will cap housing benefit at the level of the local housing allowance across the United Kingdom from 2018. This will reduce the housing benefit that will be available to fund rents and service charges in supported housing schemes. The government's proposal for England is that this funding will be replaced by a locally administered 'pot'.

As housing is a devolved function outside England, the consultation paper states that:

*“The devolved administrations (will) receive a level of funding in 2019/20 equivalent to that which would otherwise have been available through the welfare system in order to meet the additional costs of supported housing.”*

The devolved administrations will then be free to make their own arrangements for the funding of supported housing.

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A Green Paper with the detailed arrangements for the local top-up model will be published in the spring of 2017.

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## **Housing News in Wales**

An additional £136million has been confirmed for affordable housing development, flooding schemes and regeneration projects across Wales in the final budget of the Welsh Government for 2017/18. As part of the final budget, an extra £33million of capital funding will support the work of Natural Resources Wales and local authorities on priority flood risk management schemes over the next four years. This is in addition to the £150m innovative coastal risk management scheme which will start in 2018.

A further £53million of capital funding has been allocated to accelerate the delivery of the Welsh Government's key commitment to deliver 20,000 affordable homes over the course of this Assembly term – in total £1.36billion of capital will be invested in delivering this ambitious commitment to create more affordable homes. The Welsh Government will invest £50million of capital in regeneration programmes. This funding will focus on Wales' most disadvantaged communities and support wider government ambitions, including the Ministerial Taskforce for the South Wales Valleys Taskforce, the Metro and the city deals. Welsh Government Ministers will be announcing further details about the specific allocations in the coming weeks.

Welsh Finance Secretary Mark Drakeford said that:

*“The final Budget for 2017/18 provides ambition and stability in uncertain times. Following the publication of our draft spending plans in October, we have reflected on the issues raised and the feedback we received during the budget scrutiny process. We have provided a capital boost for the areas we know need additional support – flooding and regeneration – while also accelerating key priorities such as delivering 20,000 affordable homes. This funding will benefit individuals, families and strengthen communities across Wales.”*

Welsh Communities and Children Secretary Carl Sargeant said that:

*“This extra funding is excellent news for communities throughout Wales. It will make a significant contribution to achieving our target of providing an additional 20,000 affordable homes and regenerating the communities in which people live and work. Both housing and regeneration are about far more than bricks and mortar and can make a real difference to the lives of individuals and communities as a whole.”*

The Welsh Government has also announced £7.8million for its Homelessness Prevention Programme for 2017/18. The grant will support local authorities and third sector organisations to deliver frontline services to prevent homelessness, through the provision of night shelters, hostels, outreach work, mediation and bond schemes as well as providing a network of advice services. The funding comes as part of the implementation of Part 2 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014. It includes £2.8million of transitional funding, provided to local authorities to support this implementation. Councils have been awarded £5million a year, plus transitional funding, for three years, since 2015/16.

Carl Sargeant said that:

*“Providing people with a safe, warm and secure home remains a key priority. Local authorities have made a positive start in implementing the legislation we introduced last year to help everyone who is homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Our legislation means more people than ever before are getting help at an earlier stage so that homelessness can be prevented. I would urge anyone who thinks they are at risk of becoming homeless to seek advice and help. The earlier you get advice, the less likely you are to become homeless.”*

Dyfed Edwards, the Welsh Local Government Association spokesperson for housing, said that:

*“The Welsh Local Government Association welcomes the announcement of the Homelessness Prevention Programme funding. Local authorities and their partners work with thousands of households each year facing the threat and misery of homelessness. This funding is vital in ensuring that the staff and services required to prevent and relieve homelessness are available across Wales.”*

Carl Sargeant, has also announced that the Welsh Government policy for social housing rents will be maintained for 2017/18. The rent uplift for social landlord properties covered by the policy for 2017/18 is 2.5% (being the increase in the Consumer Prices Index plus 1.5%).

Stuart Ropke, Chief Executive of Community Housing Cymru, said that:

*“We welcome this announcement. Maintaining the rent settlement for 2017/18 will support housing associations to play their part in achieving the 20,000-affordable housing target during this term of Government. A secure rental income stream alongside continued financial support from the Welsh Government is vital for the future viability of Welsh housing associations, and this security means that the sector can continue to build more homes towards the 20,000 target and deliver services in communities across Wales.”*

Community Housing Cymru has signed a Housing Supply Pact with the Welsh Government and the Welsh Local Government Association.

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### **Editorial Note**

The AWICS Wales News is published by AWICS Limited. This edition was edited by Adrian Waite. Articles are written by Adrian Waite unless otherwise stated. However, the views expressed are not necessarily those of Adrian Waite or AWICS unless expressly stated.

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### **AWICS Survey**

We would be grateful if you could take part in our survey of our clients, website users, newsletter readers or others with an interest in local government or housing. If you would like to please visit <http://form.jotform.me/form/50612526489459>

## **AWICS Seminars:**

### **All You Want to Know about Welsh Social Housing Finance**

'All You Want to Know about Welsh Social Housing Finance' gives an introduction and overview of this important subject and is fully up to date with all developments. It will be held in Cardiff on 6<sup>th</sup> June 2017. It explains how local authority housing and housing association finances work in Wales and answers the following questions:

- How do the Income & Expenditure and Housing Revenue Accounts work?
- What are the recent policy developments in Welsh social housing?
- How can councils and housing associations invest in social housing?
- What are the financial opportunities for social housing in Wales?

The price of this seminar is £195 plus £39 Value Added Tax, a total of £234.

For further information or to make a booking please click here: <http://awics.co.uk/all-you-want-to-know-about-welsh-social-housing-finance-seminar>

### **All You Want to Know about Service Charges in Social Housing in Wales**

'All You Want to know about Service Charges in Social Housing in Wales' will be held in Cardiff on 12th September 2017.

Service charges are an integral part of landlords' work in financing value for money services and sustaining customer satisfaction. They have always been relatively complex but with increased financial challenges and legal and financial complexity there is an increased need to understand how service charging works. This seminar gives an introduction and overview to this important subject and is fully up to date with all developments.

The price of this seminar is £195 plus £39 Value Added Tax, a total of £234.

For further information or to make a booking please click here: <http://awics.co.uk/all-you-want-to-know-about-service-charges-in-social-housing-in-wales-2017>

### **Other AWICS Seminars**

Our next seminars are as follows:

- All You Want to Know about Service Charges in Social Housing.
- All You Want to Know about Housing Association Finance.
- Developments in Local Authority Housing Finance in England.
- All You Want to Know about Local Authority Finance.
- All You Want to Know about Local Authority Housing Finance.

Information about all our seminars can be found at: <http://awics.co.uk/seminars2017>

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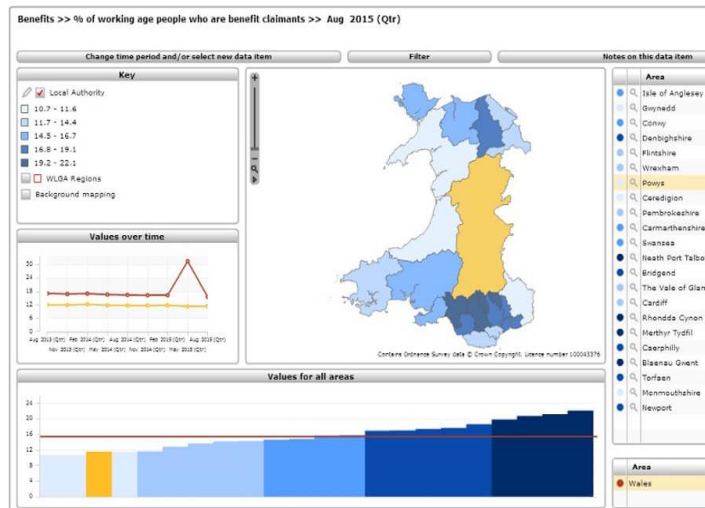
## InfoBaseCymru



- is a freely available, national information system displaying publically available data about Wales from local authority level to a local area (lower super output area) level
- provides easy access to a wide range of data for Wales. The data covers a range of themes including: people; employment; business; education; health; housing; environment; transport; and community safety
- presents data in reports, tables and maps which are all easy to export

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InfoBaseCymru is accessed via the internet for public use, we can provide restricted shared access to specific data sets where necessary.



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## About 'AWICS'

'AWICS' is a management consultancy and training company. We specialise in providing support in finance and management to clients in local government and housing in England, Scotland and Wales. We are well known for our ability to analyse and explain complex financial and management issues clearly.

Our mission statement is 'Independence, Integrity, Value'. We therefore provide support to clients from an independent standpoint that is designed to help the client to achieve their objectives. We are passionate about working with the utmost integrity. We believe that we offer the best value for money that is available today!

For more information about our services and us please visit our website at [www.awics.co.uk](http://www.awics.co.uk) or contact Adrian Waite at [Adrian.waite@awics.co.uk](mailto:Adrian.waite@awics.co.uk). Services that we offer include:

- Management Consultancy – <http://www.awics.co.uk/ManagementConsultancy.asp>
- Interim Management – <http://www.awics.co.uk/interimmanagement.asp>
- Regional Seminars - <http://www.awics.co.uk/seminars2017.asp>
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