



Welsh Government Draft Budget 2023-24

Written evidence submitted by Care & Repair Cymru: November 2022

1. What, in your opinion, has been the impact of the Welsh Government's 2022-23 Budget, including funding related to the recovery of the pandemic? Have Welsh Government business support policies been effective as the economic outlook for 2023-24 continues to worsen?

Sector Specific Response

Care & Repair is Wales's older people's housing champion. We are a long standing and trusted partner of Welsh Government, Local Authorities and Local Health Boards across Wales, consistently delivering services and solutions to support older people's independence, safety, health and well-being at home.

In 2021-22, we began to transition to a post-pandemic way of working, whilst adhering to Public Health Wales's guidance and continuing our newly adapted service provision, designed at the beginning of the pandemic. During 2021/22, we supported 57,059 older people to remain living independently in their own homes. This support, involved 58,613 individual home improvement works, including 19,144 Rapid Response Adaptations (RRAP), 4,991 hospital discharges, and 30,511 older people receiving intensive core Casework support (wrap around, holistic, comprehensive services to facilitate independent living).

Welsh Government's 2022/23 budget included an increase of 13% revenue and 83% capital for Care & Repair Agencies. The additional revenue was welcome and stabilised our operational costs. Unfortunately, due to cost of living and other large cost increases it did not enable us to expand services. The additional capital increased our Rapid Response Adaptations programme by some £1.3m. This put us in a better position to deal with the large increase in demand for RRAP and our core casework services, partly caused by post Covid backlogs working through systems, and has helped support our increased work on hospital discharges and preventing admissions. Unfortunately, the increased capital has been offset by large increases in contractor and materials costs caused by inflation, soaring energy prices, increased transport and supplies costs. Our Technical Officers have reported on the effects of the rise in costs and the impact on their work for a recent report;

'The general price of doing a bathroom adaptation, where we would take out everything in the bathroom and replace with either a level access shower or a wet room, was around about the £5,000 mark - that was our in-house team doing that work, which is really quite competitive. Because the cost of things has gone up, we're now looking at £6-£6,500 average.' – Technical Officer, south Wales

'Three or four years ago a sheet of plaster board was probably about £6 or £7, it's now about £18 or £19 a sheet, and I know 12 months ago we couldn't get hold of plaster board at all.' – Senior Technical Officer, North Wales



There is also a challenge in the recruitment and retention of a skilled and qualified contractors. Care & Repair agencies have noted a decline in the number of available contractors able to undertake works. This decline in contractor availability has resulted in increased costs to Care & Repair, meaning that our increased capital funding is not actually helping us support more people in need;

‘... so we’ve got fewer contractors available. Contractors who are left can charge more. There are a number of contractors who have left, so those resources have gone down as well.’ – Technical Officer, Newport

Care & Repair always experiences an increase in referrals during Winter, as more older people are admitted to hospitals or see GPs and are then referred to us. With an unprecedented rise in energy prices and cost of living, we are experiencing an even higher increase in referrals, as more older people fall into crisis and seek help. We have recently conducted an exercise in understanding capital budget shortfalls as we approach winter. This evidenced that we will not be able to deal with demand over winter, and we have therefore made a request to WG for an additional £500,000 RRAP to meet the demand in the system until year end.

In Winter 2021/22, we received £500,000 Winter Pressures Funding, via WGs work with WCVA in understanding and tackling pressures in third sector services. Care & Repair relied on this heavily to ensure that we were able to continue to deliver our services last Winter to the most vulnerable. This Winter (2022/23), we are informed that no Winter Pressures funding is available. Without this funding in place, there is a great concern that our service provision particularly in relation to quicker hospital discharges, improved patient flow, and admission prevention will be affected.

The role of third sector organisations in providing specialist support across Wales must not be overlooked. Care & Repair helped provide emergency support throughout the pandemic to our communities and clients, as well as continuing the most vital services face-to-face where possible and within safe working practice guidance issued Welsh Government and Public Health Wales. These services filled gaps left by other sectors as they also transitioned their service delivery to suit the drastic changes necessitated by the pandemic.

2. How should/could the Welsh Government support the economy and business following the pandemic, Brexit and inflationary and other economic pressures?

How financially prepared is your organisation for the 2023-24 financial year, how will inflation impact on your ability to deliver planned objectives, and how robust is your ability to plan for future years?

Sector specific response

Our response relates to the second part of this question. Inflation, cost of living increases, energy prices, large increases in contractor building and supplies costs, and the way in which Covid backlogs continue to make their way through the system along with a general increase in demand for our services leads us

to conclude that 2023/24 will be another incredibly difficult year for older people, our staff, our financial sustainability as organisations and the third sector as a whole.

We recently surveyed our Care & Repair Agencies at short notice to provide details of the impact of standstill budgets next year, and the following summarises the negative impact on how we would be able to support older people next year if we receive standstill budgets.

- Across 8 of 13 Care & Repair Agencies who responded, the number of posts at risk of redundancies would be 9. This would include 6 Caseworkers and 2 Technical Officers (both frontline posts) and would mean an estimated 2,025 new casework cases would not be carried out, so 2,025 fewer older people provided with support. If this was repeated across all Care & Repair Agencies, the reduction in people helped would be 2,925, or some 10% reduction in core casework.
- Care & Repair Agencies emphasised that they would try everything possible to avoid redundancies by utilising other income streams where they were available and using reserves as far as possible to subsidise the costs of continuing to run core services. We believe that reserves are comparatively low in Care & Repair compared to other third sector organisations. This makes use of reserves a short term, unsustainable option for those with limited reserves, and not an option at all for those with very low reserve levels. The 3 of 8 Care & Repair Agencies who said they could avoid redundancies using reserves next year emphasised that this was not sustainable in their longer-term business plans. Redundancies would need to be made in subsequent years when reserves ran out, and one Agency advised that by year 5, they would not be sustainable as an organisation and would need to wind up the business.
- The help and support that would **not** be delivered to 2,025 people (figures for 8 from 13 Care & Repair Agencies) in 2023/24 can be summarised as follows
 - Reduction in older people receiving vital welfare benefits advice and support at a difficult time. Increased income through welfare benefits maximisation can help reduce the risk of fuel poverty, social isolation etc.
 - Less people would receive valuable advice and interventions that help to reduce the risk of falls and accidents in the home. This would have a wider impact in relation to potential health and social care costs.
 - Less access to telecare and technology and loss of the potential to increase digital inclusion.
 - Fire Safety, Nest (fuel poverty) referrals would decrease, negatively impacting on the safety and comfort of older people and their carers
 - Increase risk of fuel poverty, cold homes, client safety
 - Reduced access to home safety measures and home adaptations through DFG, ENABLE, RRAP etc.
 - Reduced levels of independence in the home
 - Social exclusion and isolation – reduction in signposting, community engagement and reduced referrals to a range of local organisation.
- Impacts on staff in the sector was considered a major threat to our work and outcomes delivered. C&R Agencies highlighted that standstill budgets would mean an inability to keep pace with inflationary pay increases, cause financial hardship to staff in our sector who are already comparatively low paid compared to similar roles in the statutory and private sectors, and this would have a direct impact on our employee's well-being. It would also be a barrier to recruitment and ability to retain trained, experienced staff.

- For Care & Repair Cymru as the national body, a standstill budget will mean a shortfall of £39,000 to our core funded service. With other operational costs and overheads cut to the bone with seven years of standstill budgets, this would inevitably mean one senior staff redundancy, making us less effective in innovating new services, less able to shape partnerships with Health and Social Care, and less effective in bringing additional funds into Wales for older people in need from UK funding sources such as Energy Redress (Ofgem funds).
- The types of programmes, work and funding that would be reduced would have a direct detrimental impact on front line housing and health services, and we believe there would be a major opportunity cost of **not** developing and delivering successful innovative and collaborative services such as Hospital to a Healthier Home, 70+ Cymru (fuel poverty service), Attic Project decluttering support and Managing Better. We believe that if we are to:
 - continue to lead and innovate in the impactful way we have over many years,
 - continue to contribute to the saving of bed days, hospital admissions and medical interventions;
 - tackle fuel poverty and older people facing a cost-of-living crisis
 - innovate new services such as decluttering, specialist, collaborative third support to the most vulnerable older people with sensory loss, stroke and dementia;
 - ensure that older people and private sector housing are an equal part of the housing decarbonisation journey;

then appropriate and timely financial support must be provided to Care & Repair.

3. With inflation and costs of living issues continuing to escalate, what action should the Welsh Government take to help households cope with this latest crisis?

How should the Budget address the needs of people living in urban, post-industrial and rural communities and in supporting economies within those communities?

General response

We believe that there should not be a postcode lottery of support. All communities, regardless of location, demographic or income need safety and stability in their homes. This is both in the immediate term and in the medium-to-long term. We recognise that different communities will require various levels and modes of support and intervention, but this should be analysed appropriately to target funding in the right places. This should be done in conjunction with community consultation, to hear from residents in those communities what is needed. Otherwise, there is a risk of allocating funding for projects and targeted support that will not meet the needs of much of the population of that area.

The WG Budget should ensure that support is equitably distributed, helping the most vulnerable the quickest and allocating funds according to need on a 'worst-first' basis. Whilst there may be a temptation to target support at those who are easiest to support, there is a concern that this will mean those who are most vulnerable suffer for longer, entrenching inequality and dissuading others from seeking support.

There must also be significant pressure on the UK Government to provide support. The economic crisis was one exacerbated by decisions made in Westminster, and so support to mitigate their decisions and trajectory of the cost-of-living crisis must also be provided by Westminster.

Sector specific response (focussed on first part of this question)

From a Care & Repair perspective, we believe that investing in our services makes every contact count. For every casework case (around 30,000 annually), 30,000 older people will receive an assessment of their income and whether they are claiming all benefit entitlements. This is an integral part of our wrap around, holistic service. In 2021/22, we helped increase take up of unclaimed welfare benefits by our clients by £8.4million. We believe that WG increasing investment in Care & Repair would ensure more people were helped with our wrap around services- we have a strong track record and are proud of how we make every contact count with holistic, bespoke support to our clients. Conversely, if we receive standstill budgets, we estimate (as explained in response to Question 2) that we will help 2,925 (10%) fewer older people, with a reduction in our impact of some £1 million reduced benefit take up, so £1m less annually in pockets of vulnerable older people. This at a time when it would make more sense to increase these services. We have calculated that for every additional £440,000 revenue invested in Care & Repair (every increase of 10% to our revenue budget), we could employ an extra caseworker in every Agency, and increase older people household income across Wales by £815,000 per year (average of £278 per year per client). Clearly this is a small part of our wrap around service and the cost benefits of increasing front line casework, reaching older people in their own homes an enabling them to live safely and independently at home has numerous other preventative benefits (described elsewhere in this response), and high social return on investment (SROI) benefits- see our response below on the published research on preventative impact of Care & Repair.

4. Are Welsh Government plans to build a greener economy clear and sufficiently ambitious? Do you think there is enough investment being targeted at tackling the climate change and nature emergency? Are there any potential skill gaps that need to be addressed to achieve these plans?

Sector specific response

The Welsh Government has an ambitious plan to address the climate emergency and reduce Wales' impact on global emissions. For Care & Repair, tackling carbon emissions from poor-quality housing is a priority. We believe that decarbonisation and energy efficiency cannot be treated in isolation from one another, they must be considered as a mutually viable solution to both the climate crisis and fuel poverty. Within the private (owner occupied) housing sector, we strongly believe that there must be investment in measures that both decarbonise the home **and** lead to a reduction in energy bills for the occupier through comprehensive energy saving measures. These must be fitted through a 'whole house' approach that takes into consideration the needs of both the home and its dwellers. We also believe that Improvements and investments must be prioritised on a worst-first basis.

For Care & Repair clients, many of whom live in the oldest housing stock in Wales and 87% of whom are owner-occupiers, there must be significant investment in the private housing sector to allow older people

to make these improvements to their home. Care & Repair agencies have reported an increase in the disrepair of older peoples' homes, caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting lockdowns. This disrepair causes Category 1 hazards in people's homes, with nearly one in five homes in Wales having a Category 1 hazard present.¹ (Imminent risk to health). Taking a preventative approach to tackling disrepair and carbon emissions in a person's home will also have a positive impact on their energy bills, as retrofitting to prevent carbon emissions also prevents heat loss.

A preventative approach is needed to ensure we tackle the cost-of-living crisis and mitigate the crisis now to create a future free from these concerns. By retrofitting and decarbonising both new **and** existing homes, we can help older people maintain safe homes, reduce their energy bills and provide a secure home for generations to come. Wales's housing stock needs to be for the future and for all ages and generations. Green housing can help Care & Repair clients in many areas we are asked for support in – household bills, energy inefficiency and personal safety in the home. By creating homes and communities that cater for all age groups and considers the needs of all its inhabitants, we can create communities that reduce their impact on the planet. Green construction and decarbonisation of the current Welsh housing stock are key elements needed to address the climate crisis contributed to by poor quality housing.

The Optimise Retrofit Programme currently seeks to address and tackle decarbonisation and energy inefficiency in the social housing sector. Whilst there has been skills development from this current iteration of the Programme, there are challenges when applying these to the rest of the current housing stock. The Welsh Government has ambitious targets to decarbonise all existing homes in Wales (approximately 1.4 million homes) by 2050. For this to be successful, the decarbonisation of private housing sector needs to become a priority. Lessons from the social housing sector may not be applicable to the private housing sector in many circumstances – private housing is often of an older age, different construction, and with lower EPC than social housing, so is more difficult and often more costly to retrofit to a high standard.

Similarly, we welcome Welsh Government's ban on fossil fuel heating technologies in newly built social housing from October 2021, but this leaves behind the private housing sector behind. With the Welsh housing sector responsible for 21% of carbon emissions, optimised retrofit and wider cross-tenure decarbonisation proposals need to be brought forward urgently if Wales is to reach its Net Zero target. We therefore welcome the Minister for Climate Change's most recent statement in the Senedd on 9 November 2022;

'It is my intention to bring forward a replacement national demand-led scheme focused on homes in fuel poverty. In addition, I also intend to develop an integrated approach across all tenures and income levels to drive decarbonisation. The new demand-led service, which is expected to be procured next year, will replace the current Nest scheme, with a greater focus on decarbonisation. The additional integrated approach will follow,

¹ [The-Cost-of-Poor-Housing_Report_BRE-Trust_English.pdf \(bregroup.com\)](#)

developing from the experiences of ORP and other Welsh housing initiatives.’ – Julie James, Minister for Climate Change (09/11/2022)

For a green economy to be successful, there needs to be investment in skills development that link directly to this aim. There must be a focus on industries moving to a greener way of working through procurement, building and labour. For this to occur, there must be support for such industries to see the value in investing in green industry. There is already a recognised shortage of contractors available in Wales;

‘... resources have decreased. So we’ve got fewer contractors available. So contractors who are left can charge more. And there are a number of contractors who have left, so those resources have gone down as well.’ – Technical Officer, Newport

This shortage presents additional challenges when there are ambitious targets already set by Welsh Government.

As a trusted organisation who are already in the homes of tens of thousands of older people every year, we believe that Care & Repair could play a major role in the implementation of a greater all housing tenure approach to decarbonisation. We are actively exploring ways in which we could help older people consider carbon reduction measures in their homes, and how this sits alongside the need to tackle fuel poverty. We also want to increase our activity in advocating for progressive policies that make carbon reduction options affordable for people on low incomes and researching on the ground technical and financial solutions for delivering carbon reduction options to older people living in their own homes. We are concerned that our ability to contribute to this important policy and practice area will be diminished or removed if our funding levels are effectively decreased in future years through standstill budgets. The above responses, particularly to question 2, provides further information on this.

6. Is the Welsh Government using the financial mechanisms available to it around borrowing and taxation?

No comments on this

7. The Committee would like to focus on a number of other specific areas in the scrutiny of the Budget. Do you have any specific comments on any of the areas identified below?

Welsh Government policies to reduce poverty and gender inequality. Is enough support being given to those people living in relative income poverty?

Older people in receipt of either the Basic State Pension (BSP) or New State Pension (NSP) fall well below the 60% median household income, so for those solely on those incomes they will be in relative income poverty. The triple lock and Pension Credit does go some way to addressing this, but the reality for many older people is that they will still be struggling. However, in Wales there are still an estimated

around 80,000 households eligible to claim for Pension Credit that currently do not. We will continue to work with the Welsh Government via their Income Maximisation Group to sustain focus on raising awareness of pension credit via a wide range of materials and platforms to ensure older people who are not online can access the relevant information and seek support they are entitled to.

Care & Repair welcome the eligibility criteria of the Winter Fuel Support Scheme widening to include older people who are in receipt of Pension Credit. This inclusion of the most vulnerable older people means they will be able to benefit from the support that the WFSS provides. This must become a permanent feature of the WFSS, to allow older people who are not able to increase their income through additional employment or income streams, to stay warm and well throughout the winter.

With many older owner-occupiers living below the relative income poverty line, they have little available finance to undertake crucial repairs to their homes to make them safe and fit for habitation. Care & Repair has previously made the case to WG for the creation of a **safety net housing repair grant**, available to low-income owner occupiers, and supporting our ability to make their homes safe, warm and free from serious disrepair and damp. There are times at present when the lack of funding solutions means we have to walk away from unfit housing, or only provide part solutions e.g., adaptations, rather than tackling whole house problems. Safety net repair grants would not only help support those with little or no savings to undertake crucial repairs to their home but could allow them to undertake energy saving measures and retrofitting in their homes where appropriate. This would also create savings on energy bills and reduce the likelihood of fuel poverty. Finally, the availability of repair funding options in the context of making our services more efficient would make sense, as our caseworkers currently spend large amounts of time applying for several small charitable donations to resolve disrepair in a single property, when they could otherwise be helping more people in need.

In April 2022, following the first price cap increase, the Welsh Government published data showing that up to 45% of households in Wales could be living in fuel poverty, up from 14% in October 2021. In the last year alone, Home Energy Officers within our *70+ Cymru* project carried out over 800 home visits to older people to give advice and onward referrals to tackle fuel poverty in their home. From our experience in the homes of older people living in fuel poverty across Wales, we reiterate the need for a fabric first, whole house approach to ensure homes are free from draughts, leaks and able to retain heat to help reduce fuel bills and fuel poverty.

Finally, as we mentioned in question 3 above, in relation to cost effective solutions that reduce poverty:

“We believe that investing in our services makes every contact count. For every home visit we make to older people (around 30,000 casework visits annually), 30,000 older people will receive an assessment of their income and whether they are claiming all benefit entitlements. This is an integral part of our wrap around, holistic service. In 2021/22, we helped increase take up of unclaimed welfare benefits by our clients by £8.4million. We believe that WG increasing investment in Care & Repair would ensure more people were helped with our wrap around services- we have a strong track record and are proud of how we make every contact count with holistic, bespoke support to our clients. Conversely, if we receive standstill budgets, we estimate (as explained in response to Question 2) that we will help 2925 (10%) fewer older people, with a reduction in our impact of some £1million reduced benefit take up. This at a

time when it would make more sense to increase these services. We have calculated that for every additional £440,000 revenue invested in Care & Repair (every increase of 10% to our revenue budget), we could employ an extra caseworker in every Agency, and increase older people household income across Wales by £815,000 per year (average of £278 per year per client). Clearly this is a small part of our wrap around service and the cost benefits of increasing front line casework, reaching older people in their own homes an enabling them to live safely and independently at home has numerous other preventative benefits (described elsewhere in this response), and high social return on investment (SROI) benefits”.

How/whether the approach to preventative spending is represented in resource allocations (Preventative spending = spending which focuses on preventing problems and eases future demand on services by intervening early).

General Response

We believe that the priority given to preventative spending by Welsh Government has reduced since 2020, due to the understandable need to tackle the immediate impacts of the pandemic. We also recognise that some impacts of the pandemic remain and WG is now also tackling challenges in relation to economic instability. This said, we firmly believe that the time is now right to increase focus and set stretching financial targets to increase investment in preventative spend, not least because this is one of ways in which high demand in Health and Social Care services can be reduced and reduce reactive spend downstream.

Sector Specific Response

Care & Repair has a strong preventative approach. We have a direct positive impact in reducing the number of falls, hospital admissions and patient bed days. By adapting homes, providing carers with safe access, making homes warmer, decluttering and undertaking essential repairs, we enable older people to live safely and independently in their homes for longer. This reduces demand in other areas of the health and social care system and allows these sectors to focus more on clinical needs and ‘worst-first’. Our trusted relationships with older people means that we can address their long-term well-being and quality of life concerns, leading to fewer crisis points and addressing needs before they become more severe, thus reducing hospital admissions, GP visits, and delaying the need for long term residential care.

With the health service currently struggling to cope with huge pressures and demand, now is surely the time to increase funding in services such as Care & Repair to fund proactive intervention that would alleviate pressures downstream:

Public Health epidemiology suggests that by 2026, over 139,000 older people in Wales will fall more than once in their own home. Prevention must include housing support and adaptations. By increasing investment in preventative measures for older people in Wales, Care & Repair can continue to support the health and social care service and older people in Wales. The impact of our preventative work was

recently researched in collaborative research that involved Swansea University, Care & Repair Cymru and was supported by Health and Care Research Wales. The study demonstrated that C&R adaptations to homes reduces falls in older people and results in fewer admissions to hospital. The key findings were:

- At the point of referral, C&R clients had an overall higher risk of falling compared to the general, non-C&R population. So on average, C&R clients were more predisposed to falling due to health conditions and circumstances. The service is therefore well-targeted, reaching vulnerable people in need of support.
- There was a 17% annual increased likelihood of a fall related hospital admission for the general group analysed (i.e. who didn't receive a C&R intervention).
- Post intervention, the C&R client cohort didn't see fall risk increase annually as it did for the group that had not received a C&R intervention.
- There was a 13% reduction in risk of someone having a fall one year following a C&R intervention, compared to citizens that had not had an intervention (therefore reducing hospitalisation and unscheduled care admissions).
- There was a reduced risk of care home admission for people with a moderate or severe level of frailty who received a C&R intervention over 1-, 3- and 5-year time periods.

Preventative services of Care & Repair have been proven to make a real difference and to reduce the pressure on the NHS, based on hard evidence and data. We believe that greater emphasis should be placed on research such as this in determining value for money, preventative spend allocations.

How resources should be prioritised to tackle NHS waiting lists for planned and non-urgent NHS treatments. Do you think the Welsh Government has a robust plan to address this issue?

Sector specific response

Improving patient flow is key in helping to tackle NHS waiting lists for planned and non-urgent treatments. We support the implementation of the Six Goals for Urgent and Emergency Care across Wales to help speed up safe hospital discharge.

Third sector support in Wales is integral to linking hospital and community settings to provide wraparound support for vulnerable patients during hospital discharge. Care & Repair's *Hospital to a Healthier Home* service speeds up safe patient discharge for clinically optimised patients aged 50 and above who would not otherwise be able to go home due to a housing or environmental issue. The service reduces a patients' stay in hospital by six days on average and has been proven to cut readmission rates by half.

Following a successful Welsh Government pilot between Jan-March 2019, the service was funded by Welsh Government until April 2022, when the service was funded locally. The service operates in 17 hospitals across Wales and receives referrals from nearly 30 community hospitals.

Since 2019, the service has:

- Helped more than 10,000 patients leave hospital more quickly into homes that have been adapted to meet their changing needs following a hospital admission at an average unit cost of £156 per patient
- Completed over 7,100 Healthy Homes Checks to ensure longer-term safety at home and reduce readmissions
- Completed over 16,600 adaptations and home improvement works, sourcing nearly £4m in capital to do this
- Sourced over £4.1m in means-tested benefits, increasing an average patients' annual income by over £4,300
- Saved the Welsh NHS more than 62,000 bed days.

Hospital to a Healthier Home has proven its worth over time. The service has been well supported by Welsh Government. The difficulty we face is the transfer from a nationally funded Wales-wide service, to one that is funded at a local level and subject to the pressures and challenges of engaging with an NHS system that is in crisis. We have had continual difficulties in bridging the gap between our excellent service and engagement with clinical staff who refer patients and interaction with caseworkers daily versus translating this to strategic decision makers. Again this year, as with previous years in this annually funded service, there is a substantial risk that the service will not be funded in some LHBs across Wales due to a lack of engagement at a strategic level despite our continued efforts.

The sustainability of NHS, social care, further and higher education, local government and other public services more generally. Is the Welsh Government providing adequate support to the public sector to enable it to be innovative and forward looking through things like workforce planning.

No comments on this.

Whether there has been adequate investment from the Welsh Government in basic public sector infrastructure.

We believe Welsh Government does support new ideas and innovation. Our experience with developing innovative and new services is that public services do not routinely sustain, share and nationally embed services that have proven their worth beyond an initial pilot phase.

Investment in digital innovation could improve information sharing between sectors to help better design, target and deliver services based on need, especially in the health sector where we know from our experience delivering Hospital to a Healthier Home that information does not always travel with a patient between settings creating delays and difficulties in access to the right care, in the right place, at the right time. Changes in communication will allow us to develop stronger links with health boards, social care providers and other close stakeholders, allowing us deliver services more effectively.

Support for children and young people whose education, development, and mental health and well-being have been affected by the pandemic. Is there enough infrastructure investment targeted at young people?

No comments on this.

Whether it is clear how evidence and data is driving Welsh Government priority setting and budget allocations

Sector specific response

Care & Repair provides good quality data on outcomes achieved from WG, statutory body and other funding sources, via a national Care & Repair Information System. We place great emphasis on proving our worth, and regularly provide a wealth of information, data and formal evaluation reports. Last year, we were also able to reference published research on the preventative impact of Care & Repair- a collaborative study that involved Swansea University, Care & Repair Cymru supported by Health and Care Research Wales. The research demonstrated that C&R adaptations to homes reduces falls in older people and results in fewer admissions to hospital. The key findings were:

- At the point of referral, C&R clients had an overall higher risk of falling compared to the general, non-C&R population. So, on average, C&R clients were more predisposed to falling due to health conditions and circumstances. The service is therefore well-targeted, reaching vulnerable people in need of support.
- There was a 17% annual increased likelihood of a fall related hospital admission for the general group analysed (i.e., who didn't receive a C&R intervention).
- Post intervention, the C&R client cohort didn't see fall risk increase annually as it did for the group that had not received a C&R intervention.
- There was a 13% reduction in risk of someone having a fall one year following a C&R intervention, compared to citizens that had not had an intervention (therefore reducing hospitalisation and unscheduled care admissions).
- There was a reduced risk of care home admission for people with a moderate or severe level of frailty who received a C&R intervention over 1-, 3- and 5-year time periods.

Preventative services of Care & Repair have been proven to make a real difference and to reduce the pressure on the NHS, based on hard evidence and data. We shared this research with our colleagues in Welsh Government, along with other information in a case for increased funding this year, which was successful as referenced in questions 1 and 2 above. We hope that such hard evidence will prevail over the long term when WG considers how it prioritises and allocates funding over the next few challenging years, and recognises how preventative spend reduces pressures and demand downstream in more expensive health and care services.

Is support for third sector organisations, which face increased demand for services as a consequence of the cost-of-living crisis and the pandemic, sufficient?

Sector specific response

No. In many instances, third sector organisations and not-for-profits filled the gaps in provision that were left when key areas moved into a period of 'firefighting' during the pandemic. Throughout this period, we were able to qualify for additional grants and pots of funding that were created, to aid in addressing and tackling the huge increase in demand for our services. As we move into a post-pandemic world and begin to 'return to normal', those additional funding opportunities have disappeared, while demand for our services has increased. The level of service provided during the pandemic is still expected, but the level of funding does not match this. This means that many third sector organisations, including Care & Repair, are expected to do more with less. This, coupled with the increases in construction, industry, and cost of living, has made delivering the same level of services impossible.

Our earlier response (questions 1, 2 and 3 above) expands on the extreme difficulty associated with the prospect of standstill budget next year, and our inability to deal with increased demand for our service post pandemic and as more people need our support due to cost of living crisis.

In the context of support from wider public and statutory services, it is still the case that how we are engaged as a sector differs across different parts of the system- regional partnership boards, local authorities and local health boards also differ vastly in levels of strategic engagement with us. This can and does lead to post code lottery when it comes to the local services delivered by Care & Repair. It also jeopardises proven, impactful services such as Hospital to a Healthier Home, which has been successfully operating pan Wales across some 17 hospitals for some four years, pump primed by Welsh Government funding, but at the time of writing, has received no forward commitment for continuation in 2023/24. This is frustrating given how well it delivers quicker safe hospital discharges, improves patient flow, and prevents re-admissions, taking the strain off NHS, Social Care at a time when public service finances face such difficult times ahead.

The wellbeing of staff on the front line must be a vital consideration for Welsh Government. We face a situation where qualified, compassionate staff are unable to stay in their roles due to low pay, but the majority of the third sector is unable to offer an increase in pay as budgets do not allow, as these budgets have not had a rise. This can lead to staff leaving the movement for other jobs or staying in these jobs but facing the same cost-of-living challenges as their clients. In order to retain staff and offer job stability, third-sector budgets and funding must remain at a viable amount and reviewed in line with the economic situation faced by the country at the time.

What are the key opportunities for Government investment to support 'building back better' (i.e. supporting an economy and public services that better deliver against the well-being goals in the Well-being of Future Generations Act)

Sector specific response

There are opportunities to invest in local areas and make them designed for the needs on the whole community. For older people, the design of their local areas may dissuade them from venturing much beyond their front door. Public seating, bathrooms, transport and disability access are key considerations of an older person when they are out of their one. If their local area does not cater for their needs, they



are less likely to use it, which can result in self-isolation and a worry about being away from basic amenities. For Wales to truly be a Wales of Cohesive Communities, these communities must be built and maintained to suit the needs of their population.

For more information please contact [\[REDACTED\]](#)