

HB 43

National Assembly for Wales

Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee

Housing (Wales) Bill: Stage 1

Response from: Flintshire County Council

Dear Minister

Housing (Wales) Bill

This is a really exciting time for us as a Welsh nation as we develop our first Housing Act. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft Bill. Flintshire has provided feedback at every stage so far and worked closely with the WLGA and the Housing profession to provide input and views, but I wanted to take this final opportunity to summarise this councils view on some key areas.

Homeless prevention

Flintshire fully supports the increased focus on homeless prevention, and Flintshire has agreed to pilot the new legislation and the introduction of a Housing Solutions service from April this year. We do however have a concern about the increased cost to local authorities at a time of severely constrained budgets. We support the proposals to assess the vulnerability of those leaving prison and for the duty to only apply to those who are vulnerable, rather than all ex-offenders as at present. .

We do have some concerns that the duty to provide accommodation for intentionally homeless families with children, from 2019, will produce the unintended consequence of increasing homelessness within this group. Flintshire supports the proposal to strengthen the duty of Housing Associations to work positively with Local Authorities to meet the needs of homeless people. We are not convinced of the benefits of a separate homeless strategy and feel this could be met via identification of need and actions to address it in the Single Integrated plan.

Private Rented Sector

Flintshire is developing a package of options to support the growth of the PRS to enable it to discharge duty there. The council supports proposals for the introduction of a licensing scheme, as a means to raise standards, however this could increase costs for the Local Authority as if issues with property standards are uncovered additional pressures will be created for the Environmental Health Service in taking forward enforcement action.

Gypsy travellers

We fully support the proposals to create a legal responsibility to meet the needs of the Gypsy traveller community as in Flintshire we have always taken this responsibility very seriously and have felt that neighbouring authorities have not always been as pro-active. However this duty needs to recognise that Councils will need WG capital resource to meet

this responsibility.

HRA subsidy system

Finally as you are aware the council fully supports the proposals to exit the HRA subsidy system as this will not only provide some additional resource to fund the delivery of the WHQS programme, but will also provide the potential for a council house building programme.